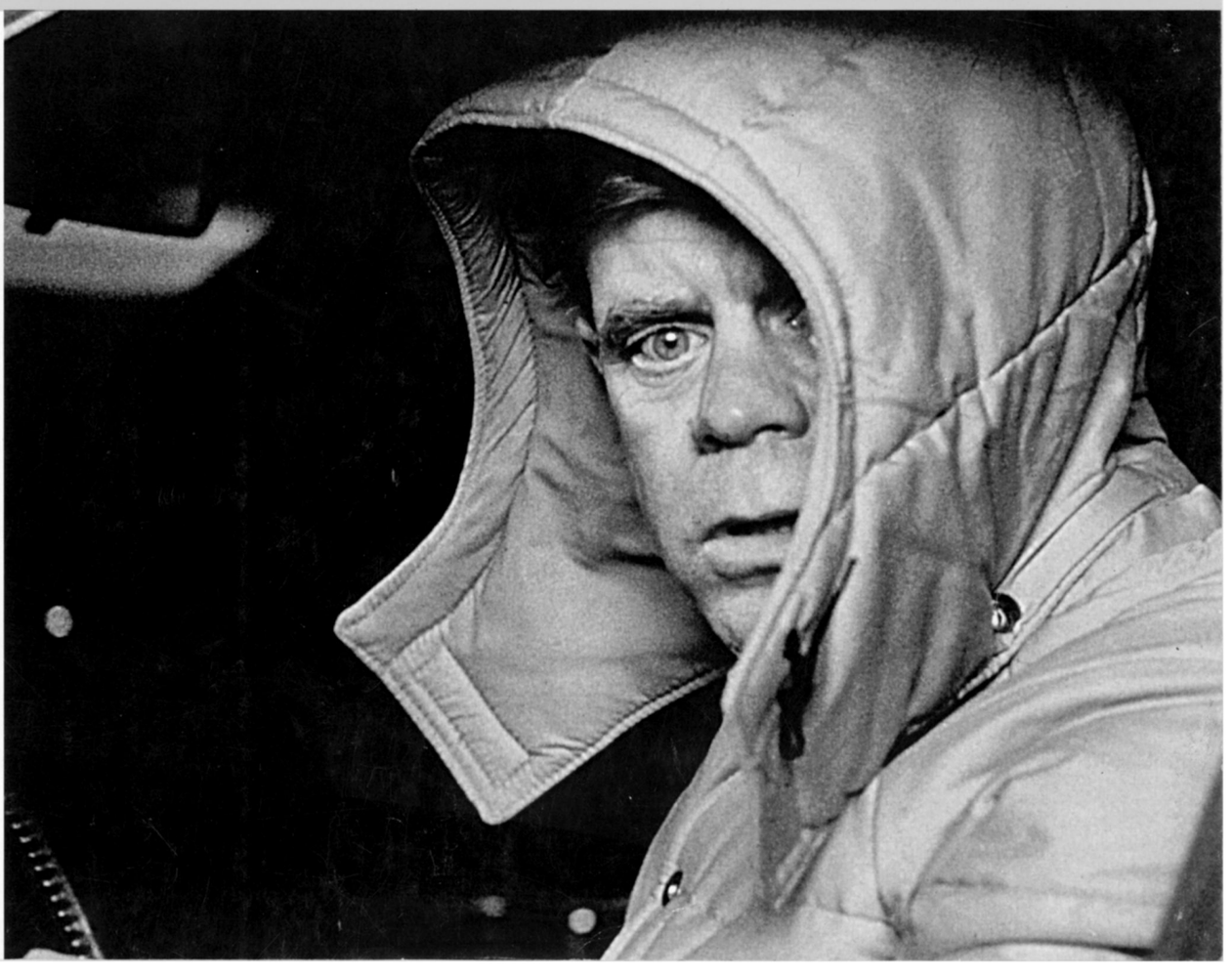
Film Quarterly

Volume 50
Number 1
Fall 1996

Interviews with Jean Renoir and Saul Bass

Gregg Araki—Film-maker for a Queer Generation

Antonia's Line • *Fargo* • Book Survey Part II



$5.95

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

PLAYING OUT THE EMPIRE

Ben-Hur and Other Toga Plays and Films, 1883-1908. A Critical Anthology

Edited with Introductions and Notes by DAVID MAYER and an essay on the incidental music for toga dramas by KATHERINE PRESTON

Mayer collects the most important playscripts and film scenarios of toga plays, introducing each one with discussion that casts new light on Victorian attitudes toward issues of class, gender, religion, and imperialism.

"A fascinating volume."

—Nineteenth-Century Literature.

1994 336 pp.; 32 pp illustrations **$55.00**

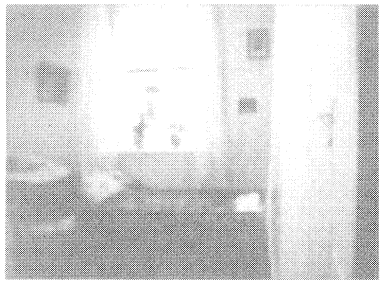
MUSIC AND THE SILENT FILM

Contexts and Case Studies, 1895-1924

MARTIN MILLER MARKS

The first of three volumes investigating film music, this innovative book shows that there was much more to silent film music than generally recognized—it was often planned from the start as an integral part of the film. This volume covers the music of such films as *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, *The Birth of a Nation*, and René Clair's *Entr'acte*.

October 1996 352 pp.; music examples **$45.95**



THE FILMS OF LUIS BUNUEL

Subjectivity and Desire

PETER WILLIAM EVANS

"Evans interprets the films as if they are dreams, teasing out their hidden meanings. It's his ingenuity in doing so that keeps *The Films of Luis Bunuel* afloat."—*Literary Review.*

"[An] intelligent and eclectic study of cinema's great taboo-breaker."

—Sight and Sound.

(Oxford Hispanic Series)

1995 224 pp.; 8 pp plates paper **$17.95** cloth **$49.95**

IMAGES OF THE ALGERIAN WAR

French Fiction and Film, 1954-1992

PHILIP DINE

Dine has written the first full-length survey of the French fiction and film generated by the Algerian war.

"[A] continuously intelligent and engrossing study."

—Times Higher Education Supplement.

1995 280 pp. **$59.00**

NOVEL TO FILM

An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation

BRIAN MCFARLANE

This book offers the first systematic theoretical account of the process by which the great (and not so great) works of literature are transformed into the good, bad (sometimes ugly), but always distinctive medium of cinema.

1996 320 pp.; 5 halftones paper **$18.95** cloth **$65.00**

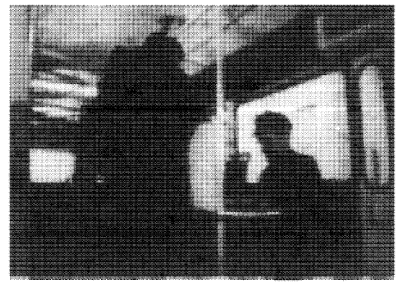
ENGAGING CHARACTERS

Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema

MURRAY SMITH

This book presents a detailed discussion of the varieties of emotional response to films, integrating them into a larger theory of our engagement (or "identification") with characters in both cinematic and literary fictions.

1995 280 pp.; 65 frame enlargements, 5 figures paper **$22.00** cloth **$55.00**



Named an Outstanding Academic Book for 1995 by Choice

WAVING THE FLAG

Constructing a National Cinema in Britain

ANDREW HIGSON

"Carefully researched, closely reasoned, elegantly written, and highly thought-provoking....In short, this is by far the best book about British film yet published."—*Choice.*

"[A] thoughtful, stimulating and well-researched book."

—Sunday Telegraph.

1995 336 pp.; 36 figs. **$75.00**

Now in a new edition!

AUSTRALIAN FILM 1978-1994

A Survey of Theatrical Features Second Edition

Compiled and edited by SCOTT MURRAY

This most comprehensive reference to Australian cinema of the last two decades details over 340 feature films. Each entry gives technical and cast credits and offers a succinct article covering the film's content and significance.

1996 460 pp.; 360 b/w photos paper **$25.00**

Prices are subject to change and apply only in the U.S. To order or for more information please call 1-800-451-7556. In Canada, call 1-800-387-8020.

Visit our new website: HTTP://WWW.OUP-USA.ORG

Volume 50
Number 1
Fall 1996

Film Quarterly

Editor
Ann Martin
Editorial Intern
Antonia Richmond
Copy Editor
Jonathan Leff
Book Review Editor
Stephen Prince
New York Editor
William Johnson
Los Angeles Editor
David Ehrenstein
London Editor
Edward Buscombe
Rome Editor
Gideon Bachmann

Editorial Board
Leo Braudy
Ernest Callenbach
Brian Henderson
Albert Johnson
Marsha Kinder
Linda Williams

Indexed in
Access
Art Index
Arts and Humanities
Citation Index
Book Review Index
Film Literature Index
Humanities Index
Index to Critical Film Reviews
International Index
to Film Periodicals
MLA Directory of Periodicals
Readers' Guide to
Periodical Literature

Printed in USA

Type
TechType
Richmond, CA

Printing
Allen Press
Lawrence, KS

Leo Braudy
Renoir at Home: Interview with Jean Renoir 2

Pamela Haskin
"Saul, can you make me a title?"—Interview with Saul Bass 10

James M. Moran
Gregg Araki: Guerrilla Film-maker for a Queer Generation 18

REVIEWS

Karen Jaehne
Antonia's Line 27

Devin McKinney
Fargo 31

ANNUAL *FILM QUARTERLY* BOOK ROUNDUP, PART II 35

Cover: (top) Willeke van Ammelrooy in Marleen Gorris's *Antonia's Line* (see page 27); (bottom) William H. Macy in the Coen brothers' *Fargo* (see page 31).

Film Quarterly (ISSN 0015-1386) is published quarterly by the University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 94720. Periodicals postage paid at Berkeley, California, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian GST #R122058662. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Film Quarterly, University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94720.

Subscriptions are $24 per year for individuals, $53 per year for institutions. Subscribers outside the U.S., add $6 for postage. Single issues are $5.95 for individuals, $14 for institutions. Domestic claims for nonreceipt of issues should be made within 90 days of the month of publication, overseas claims within 180 days. Overseas delivery is not guaranteed.

Subscription requests and requests for advertising rate cards should be sent to the Journals Department, manuscript enquiries to the Editor, Film Quarterly, at the University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94720. Unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

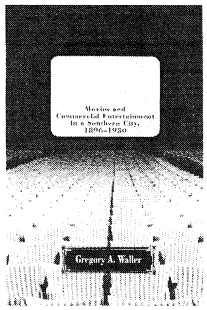
The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1994. ∞

Back issues subsequent to Volume 18 (1965-66) write to the University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94720. ♻ This journal is printed on recycled paper. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors only.
© 1996 by the Regents of the University of California.

MAIN STREET AMUSEMENTS

Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896-1930

Gregory A. Waller



Winner of the Theatre Library Association Award

"This is an authoritative and often fascinating study."—*Choice*

"A valuable portrait of how a city and its culture were altered by the forces of technology, as well as an instructive history of early 20th century culture wars that anticipated our own heated battles of today."—*Kirkus Review*

34 b&w photographs • 320 pp.
Hardcover $49.00 • Paperback $19.95

MOVIE CENSORSHIP AND AMERICAN CULTURE

Edited by Francis G. Couvares

Viewing the cinema as historically contested entertainment, *Movie Censorship and American Culture* explores nearly a century of struggle over the cinematic representation of sex, crime, violence, religion, race, and ethnicity. The contributors place movies within the context of American social history, shedding light on the various organizations, both inside and outside Hollywood, that have tried to censor the silver screen.

12 b&w illustrations • 256 pp.
Hardcover $45.00 • Paperback $17.95

AT THE PICTURE SHOW

Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture

Kathryn H. Fuller

This social history of the movies during the silent film era charts the gradual homogenization of small-town and urban American movie audiences as itinerant shows gave way to established nickelodeon theaters and then to more luxurious picture palaces. The book demonstrates for the first time how a fan culture emerged in the United States and enriches our understanding of mass media's relationship to early twentieth-century American society.

21 b&w illustrations • 352 pp.
Hardcover $34.95
Coming in November

AVAILABLE AT LOCAL BOOKSTORES OR CALL

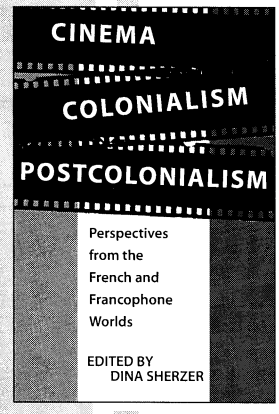
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION PRESS
800/782-4612

Coming this fall and winter from TEXAS

Cinema, Colonialism, Postcolonialism

Perspectives from the French and Francophone Worlds

EDITED BY DINA SHERZER



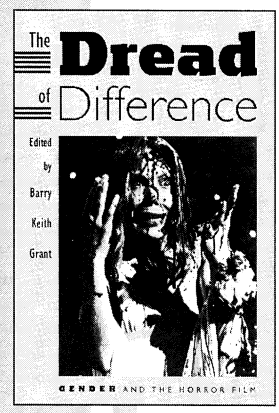
In this first major study of French colonial and postcolonial cinema, Sherzer compiles essays by some of the foremost scholars on the subject who interrogate and analyze the realities behind the images of the nation's past and present. Through an examination of France and its colonies, multiethnic contemporary France, and cinematic discourses which have been and are being produced about France's colonial past, these authors explore how the images relay underlying assumptions and their relation to historical and political facts. A major contribution to postcolonial research.

$19.95 paperback, $40.00 hardcover

The Dread of Difference

Gender and the Horror Film

EDITED BY BARRY KEITH GRANT



An undying procession of sons of Dracula and daughters of darkness has animated the horror film genre from the beginning. Indeed, in this pioneering exploration of the cinema of fear, Grant and twenty other film critics posit that horror is always rooted in gender, particularly in anxieties about sexual difference and gender politics. As these essays persuasively show, not only are horror movies about patriarchy and its fear of the feminine, but they also offer feminist critique and pleasure.

Texas Film Studies Series, Thomas Schatz, Editor

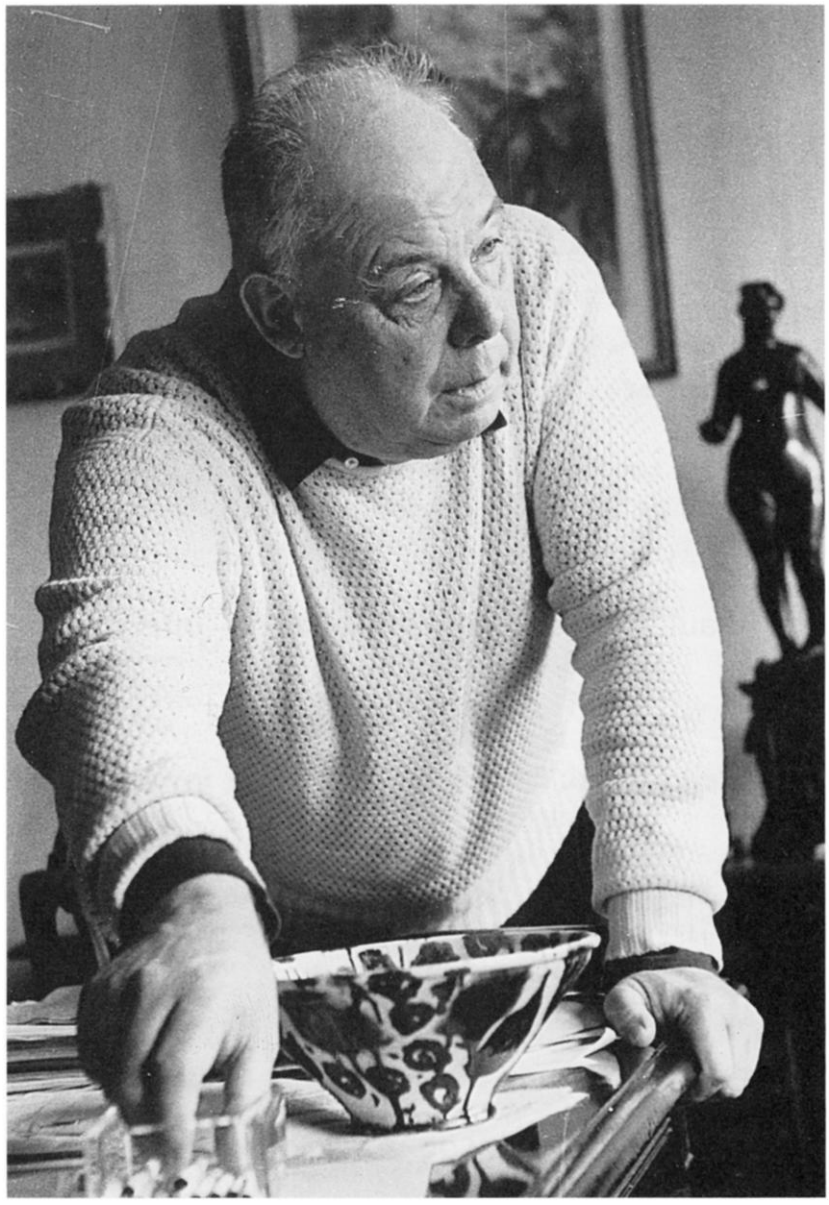
$24.95 paperback, $55.00 hardcover

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS
Box 7819 Austin, TX 78713

Film Quarterly
Vol. 50, No. 1 [pp. 2-8]
Renoir at Home: Interview with Jean Renoir

Please note: Due to the formatting of the original print version, this article's title does not appear on the following page. No content is missing from the article, and its pages are presented in the correct sequential order.

Please click on "Next Page" (at the top of the screen) to begin viewing this article.



Leo Braudy

In September of 1970, after I had finished a first draft of Jean Renoir: The World of His Films *and felt completely steeped in his work, I went to Beverly Hills to interview the man himself. Beyond the pleasure of meeting him after having spent so much time with his films, I wanted to track down some of the more elusive facts about his life and career, and try to get his own sense of the continuity of his films and preoccupations. He and his wife Dido lived near the top of one of those twisty roads that snake up the hills behind Beverly Hills and Bel Air, no names on the mailboxes. Whatever question I might have had about the great French director living in Los Angeles vanished when I saw the house.*

There was a beautiful view from the back terrace, even a laurel tree, and the whole atmosphere was like a California version of the Provence around Les Collettes, the farmhouse where, along with Paris, he had grown up. Basically bare wood floors with Oriental rugs on them. White painted brick walls. Even the modern comfortable furniture seemed to fit in with the portrait of the young Jean in hunting outfit painted by his father, the large bust of his mother, and some of his ceramics from his pre-film years. The interview lasted a few hours and ranged widely over whatever subject took our fancy. I did manage to collect some new facts, as well as a few pithy aphorisms to quote in the book. But the interview itself has never been printed. I've put together some intriguing chunks of it here both as an homage to Renoir in the 102nd anniversary of his birth and as a testament to the continuing vitality of his work.

Renoir at Home

Interview with Jean Renoir

Renoir is wearing green khaki pants, the crotch very low, a long beige cloth coat slung around him, a whitish shirt buttoned at the neck, powder-blue socks, and yellowish-brown moccasins. Dido seems perhaps in her early fifties, lithe and active, brown complexion, wearing beige ski pants and a white sheer cotton blouse. She is very solicitous about him, and gently satiric as well. When he is about to autograph my copy of *Renoir mon père*, for which he puts on dark-rimmed glasses, she jokes, "Now, Jean, where is your pen? Do you remember how to spell Mr. Braudy's name?"

Renoir still seems very vital and quick, although he does forget things, or so it seems. It's a strange feeling, to meet someone in whose work you've been immersed and that you know so well. When his memory slips, it's as if he's forgotten his lines. But why should he remember details, all equally immediate to me, many distant to him?

In terms of ideas and wit, he is fine. A lot of his pauses seem due to his imperfect English, a search for the appropriate word. He looks somewhat shrunken from the bear-like presence of his prime (when Jean Gabin called him "Le Gros"), as if he now has a wooden hanger inside his coat. His nose is veined, and dark on one side, perhaps from a recently broken blood vessel. One of his eyes is more closed than the other—the result of a minor stroke? He doesn't talk especially slowly, except in pausing to formulate ideas he wants to get across. I can see how in more robust days his pauses would have been taken as a kind of solidity, not the vagueness one might now—because of his age—assume they were.

Anna Magnani in
Le Carrosse d'or

He says he is sorry he had asked me ahead of time not to use the tape recorder, but whenever he heard himself speaking English, he blushed. He is very solicitous to make sure he isn't talking too fast, looking down at my pen to see if I have come to a stop. He always has something more to say, and I often find myself asking another question that turns out to be an interruption, because he is about to elaborate on his previous response. And he doesn't really repeat himself very much, unlike Hitchcock, for instance, whose interviews always feature the same handful of anecdotes and formulations.

Despite some apparent disability from his WWI leg wound and his present age, he shuffles and shambles around the house with a jaunty air, not seeming to take much deliberate control over his movements. When he wants to stand up just before I leave, he asks me to hold the small pewter cup that contains his sherry, because he can't get out of the chair while holding it.

As we're talking, he points to where I have rested my drink on a magazine and asks me if I'm married. "It's the act of a married man, whenever he has a drink in his hand, to worry if there are any coasters around." The kind of detail he's so good at. He asks me what I am going to do afterward, and I say I'm going to San Francisco to see my sister and her new baby. And he visibly brightens up, gives a big smile, almost a Renoir cliché. Later Dido asks the same thing, and I mention visiting my sister and my aunts. She says, "So this is a family trip and to your family you're added Jean Renoir." Not to be outdone in compliments, I say, "No, I have Jean Renoir and to him I've added my family." They both smile, although I'm not sure of the difference in meaning and perhaps it just appeals to their sense of humane symmetry.

When I leave, he shakes hands many times, says to send along any questions I've missed and also to tell him next time that it would take so long, that it was such an important interview. He keeps saying I have a whole book there.

Leo Braudy: Did you use the canvasses left to you by your father as a cushion against financial problems, so that you could be more free in your film-making?

Jean Renoir: When I did use them, I used them unwillingly. When I made movies, my only idea was to be successful, to deliver the goods. In spite of myself I was attracted to certain subjects and ways of treating them. I was never entirely successful with business. Since I had the paintings, practically I was more free than the actors, who had no money at all. But I didn't think of it.

When you sit here among the paintings by your father that you still keep, do you ever think of the contrast between your young painted self in the blue hunter's suit and your older self sitting in front of the painting?

I don't like to mix emotions with plastic arts. I'm trying to enjoy them without any sentimental feeling.

One touch that I like very much in La Chienne *is the Renoir that the two* clochards *are admiring in the gallery window toward the end of the film.*

It happened that it was there and I used it. . . . You know, I must not exaggerate commercial problems. Outside of the fight over *La Chienne* and some trouble with my early talking pictures, I always managed to shoot what I wanted.

Your own work begins with a more epic canvas and then later in your career you become more interested in pastoral. It's the reverse of what the Renaissance thought was the normal progression for artists: from pastoral beginnings to epic maturity.

If I didn't try to produce epic films after a certain

Eléna et les hommes:
Ingrid Bergman and Jean Marais

La Chienne: Michel Simon and Janie Mareze

period, it's mainly because I wasn't confronted with subjects of an epic value. In a way, both of my war films, *La grande illusion* in 1937 and *Le Caporal épinglé* in 1962, are about war prisoners. I started telling the story the same way. Then in the process of making the film not only the subject changed but my mind changed as well.

The 1939 war was not an epic war. It was a war of jails, a war of propaganda, a war of cruelty. It was a war for people who weren't the size of the people in the First World War. The people in that war were like knights during a crusade of the 12th century or characters from an episode in Virgil. The 1939 period gives us characters who are more petit-bourgeois. They have greatness of their own, of course, but a different style of greatness. The war of 1939 was not a war of epic personages. I tried to convey its special quality by a scene in *Le Caporal épinglé* in which the character Ballochet, played by Claude Rich, sits on a toilet and, while fulfilling his natural processes, tells the corporal, Jean-Pierre Cassel, of his dreams to be a hero, and how they have failed.

You wrote in Renoir My Father *that your father would have been horrified if any of his sons grew up to be a hero.*

He would have believed he was horrified. My father believed firmly that you never act as you plan. Without being an existentialist, he believed, and I believe—perhaps by imitation—that action always precedes the plan. People are always heroes by accident. There is an unconscious force that makes a certain individual born a hero. In our blueprint civilization, essence is always supposed to precede existence. But I think it was a very intelligent move of Sartre's to insist on the opposite, that existence precedes essence.

A country scene from *Le petit théâtre de Jean Renoir*

Do we need these accidental heroes today?

Today it would be a good thing to have more heroes. We need them. And they would probably be very ordinary people. I knew a few people close to being heroes in the First World War, when I was in the Air Force. Guynemer [the French flying ace of World War I], he was one. He was possessed by a kind of strength he didn't really understand. He went off shooting down innumerable planes in a kind of frenzy, perhaps forgetting that there were human beings inside the planes. There's always a kind of inhumanity about heroism. The Garden of Eden had a population of non-heroes.

What about those people who assume the exterior of heroes, but don't have the insides, who use the panoply of heroism just to impose on others?

Most real heroes don't look like heroes. The heroic look is a cliché. Gabin [in *La grande illusion*] does not have the appearance of a hero. He's just a man who does his job, without following any theory. Heroes act in a certain way because it's their function, it's their job, to act that way.

The real reason for any picture is to explain a character who is following out his destiny. Boeildieu, the character played by Pierre Fresnay in *La grande illusion*, isn't a hero in that sense. He is a man who thinks in terms of his caste, his cavalry upbringing. When he puts on white gloves before he is to distract Stroheim so that Gabin and Dalio can escape, Gabin doesn't understand. Why the ceremony?, he wonders. My father would have been with Gabin.

So Boeildieu needs the proper gloves in order to feel he's doing something heroic?

Yes, and clothing is an important proposition to remember in writing for the screen. We have a saying in French, *l'habit fait le moine*—"the garment makes the man." It's a true saying, but only in a superficial way. If a man becomes a hero wearing the outfit of a

hero, it proves that he had something inside he didn't guess was there. His action and the surrounding circumstances make it authentic.

In pictures and real life I hate what we call psychology. I believe so much that we are influenced by our surroundings. The study of the soul of someone living on such and such a street means nothing to me. Every bit in a human being is produced by heredity and surroundings.

The best director in our days—someone who amazed me with his feeling for picturesque locations and strange characters—that's Orson Welles. He's a great creator. The idea of a tycoon is not the same, can't be the same, after *Citizen Kane*. *Citizen Kane* is not what we read before about such people. It is a work that is really due to the observation of the real world and on the other hand it is the complete creation of Orson Welles.

But with all his troubles, Welles has not managed to make as many films as you.

But he keeps up the fight against the cliché. That's why he has so much financial trouble. Chaplin has the same ability, only in a different style. The fact that Orson Welles and Chaplin didn't work in Hollywood for a long time was very bad for Hollywood. It was a terrible mistake. Orson Welles represents a case of pure Americanism, but influenced by some Europeans. He brought to Hollywood the idea of a particular world.

I have always especially liked the way in your films when you're in danger of becoming too solemn, you do something funny or ironic, and when you're in danger of becoming too comic and frivolous, you interject something serious.

I try to be clever about that. In each film, you discover it slowly: the proper balance. Usually I start on my pictures with the possibility of contrast or of telling a story that is absolutely real but unbelievable in some aspect. I'm terribly attracted by what seems unusual but difficult to understand, not difficult because of the plot but because of the complexity of characters. I try to work close to nature—but nature is millions of things and there are millions of ways of understanding its propositions.

Perhaps one of the things that pushed me to make a film like *La Marseillaise* was to destroy the cliché that people who are possessed by a great idea are necessarily very serious people who speak with a certain dignity and present a certain figure to their followers. Instead I tried to be a witness of the daily life of the participants of a great tragedy. It's hard for an English-speaking audience to get, but I purposely made all the characters speak in very common language. For instance, at the end of the career and almost the life of Louis XVI, he discovers that tomatoes are a very nice vegetable, and he's sorry he hasn't known them before.

What is interesting about the cliché is that you can use it willingly as a frame. Inside, the characters don't follow the cliché. Outside, then, it doesn't matter. But it sets them up.

That remark reminds me of the way La Chienne, Le Carrosse d'or, *and* Le petit théâtre de Jean Renoir *all begin with the frame of a proscenium arch or theatre curtains.*

The first episode in *Le petit théâtre* is deliberately a cliché. I was very careful to have a set that looked like a set. It was necessary to have a lot of cardboard and makeup in this story of a beggar and his dreams.

So the frame is like the clothes on a hero, the habit on a monk?

Let me give you an example. Suppose a director or producer is casting the part of a sailor. A normal bad actor would work hard in order to have the real costume, the real walk, the real language of a sailor. Perhaps he will even take a trip on a boat to be burned by the real wind of the sea. Perhaps he will buy a real sailor coat from a real sailor. As a result, he will look like a real ham. Let's now try Chaplin as a sailor. He will arrive with derby, little cane, big shoes. But inside he'll be so much a real sailor that he'll be convincing despite the fact that his costume isn't right.

Le Caporal épinglé:
Jean-Pierre Cassel

La grande illusion

Doesn't this qualify your long admiration for Stroheim? He was so crazy about clothing detail that he spent enormous amounts to get his actors the right period underwear.

Even Stroheim's mistakes are interesting. The big problem for a film-maker is the part you must give to the outside truth and the part to the inside truth. The inside should be the only important one.

What then do you think of General Rolland, the character played by Jean Marais in Eléna et les hommes?

He's a very weak man. He is the selfish, rich man who likes any kind of adventure under one condition: that it can't harm him. He's too careful to get into anything serious. The real hero of *Eléna* is Elena herself. The kind of hero I admire, who is basically good, is La Chesnaye in *Rules of the Game*. And that whole movie is a result of my belief that we are living in a century of compromises.

Norman Mailer once described the film director as a kind of general deploying his forces. . . .

Too many directors think of themselves that way. They are generals who tell the trees to go over there, the people over there, the sets over there. But a director must absorb things, not keep them at a distance.

In Le Caporal épinglé, *what does* épinglé *signify*?

It's "pinned"—an allusion to butterflies pinned through the stomach onto a board.

That's what I thought. But that seems the opposite of the English title.

It is unfortunately opposite. We couldn't get a good translation for "the pinned-up corporal." "The pin-up corporal" didn't work. So *The Elusive Corporal* was the only one anyone came up with.

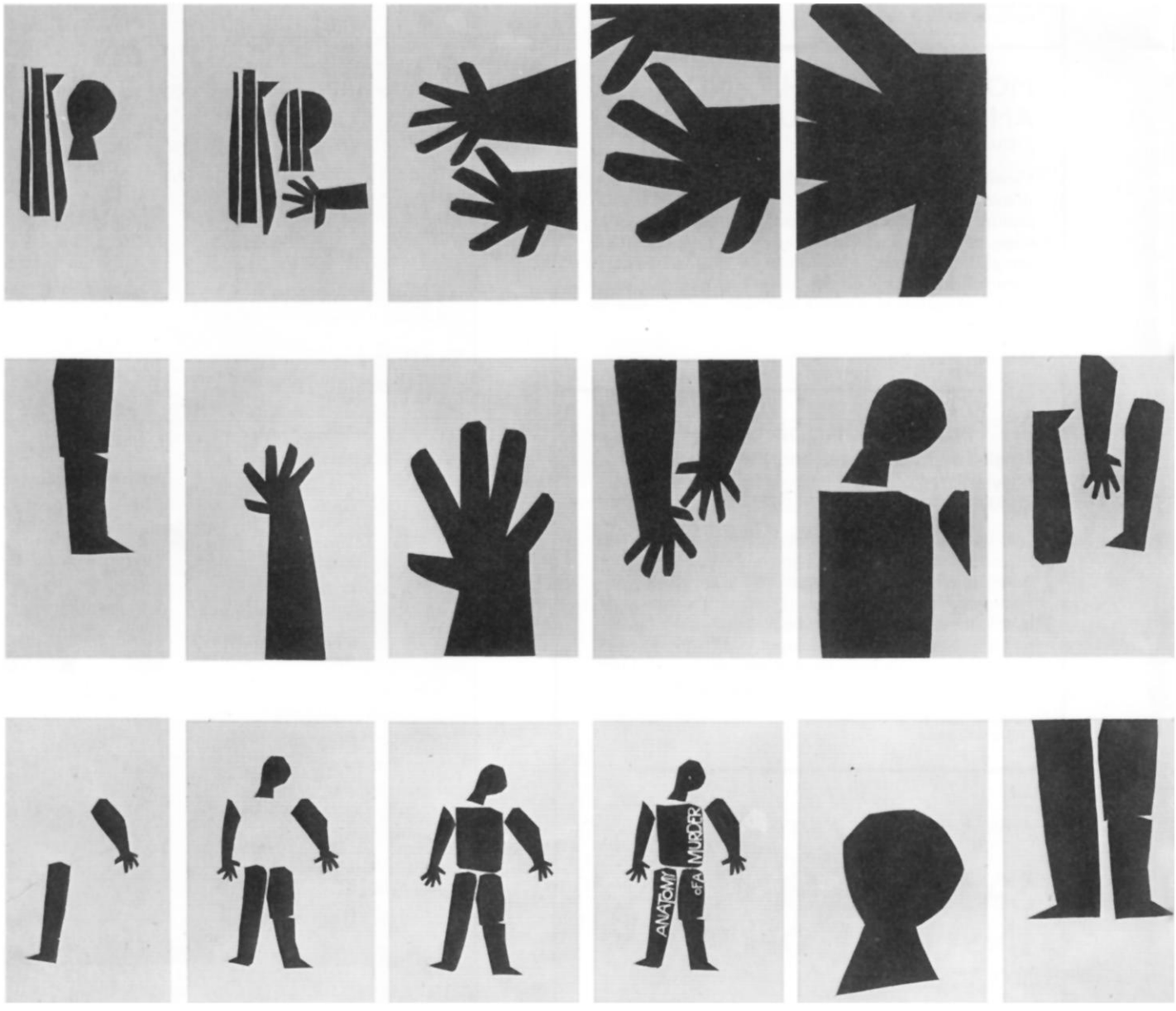
The English title makes it seem as if the film is about escapes and freedom, when it's actually about boundaries and limits.

Aren't they the great themes, the great facts, of our time?

■ Leo Braudy is a member of the *FQ* editorial board. He and Marshall Cohen are preparing a 5th edition of *Film Theory and Criticism*.

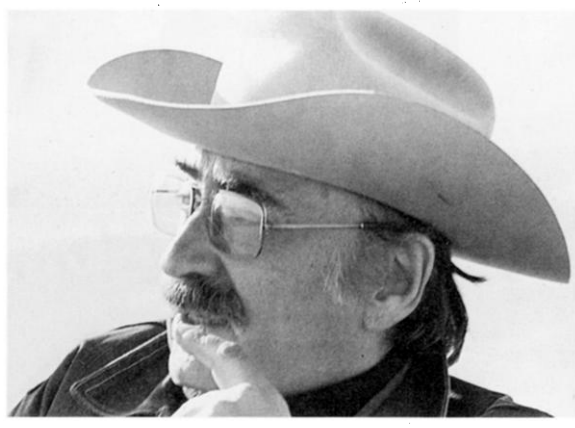
Pamela Haskin

"Saul, can you make me a title?"



Opening sequence for *Anatomy of a Murder*

Interview with Saul Bass



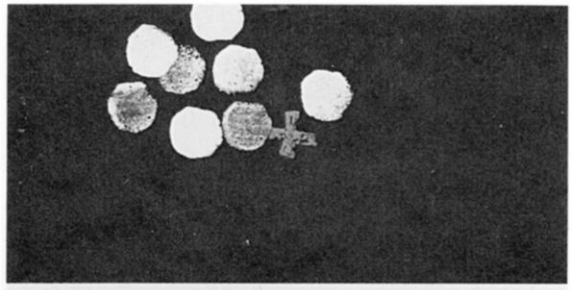
Up until his recent death, Saul Bass continued to carve his artistic signature on the movies. Martin Scorsese aptly described the power of a Bass title sequence when he said, "His titles are not simply unimaginative 'identification tags'—as in many films—rather, they are integral to the film as a whole. When his work comes up on the screen, the movie itself truly begins." In his review of the film *Walk on the Wild Side*, critic Andrew Sarris wrote that the Bass credits were actually the only reason for seeing the movie. When musing to himself as to whether the cat who appears in the opening sequence had given a better performance than the star, Sarris noted that "The cat was directed by Bass while Miss Fonda was directed by Edward Dmytryk."

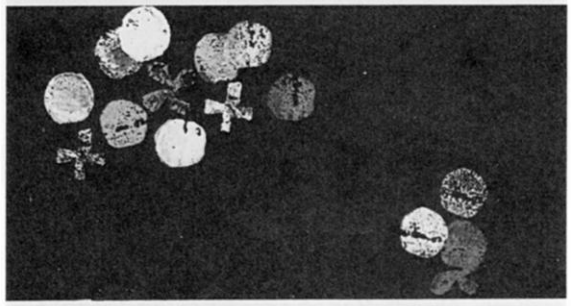
One marked characteristic of the Bass title is that its images undergo a journey whereby they are transformed into the unexpected. A famous example is the flower petal in the opening sequence to *Bonjour Tristesse,* which transforms several times before resolving into a teardrop. In the opening to Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, bars of text ascend and descend, mimicking elevators in motion; white lines invade the screen, simulating the grid pattern in the skyscraper that dominates the opening shot. Another of Bass's famed transformations is the eyeball that swirls into the vortex at the opening of *Vertigo*.

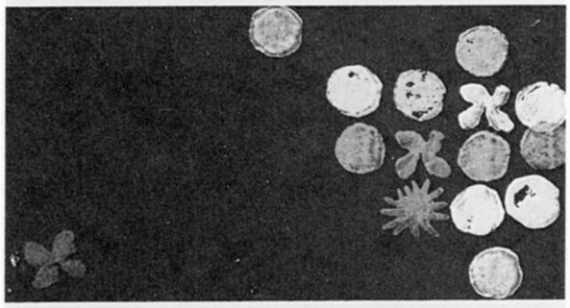
Martin Scorsese's most recent film, *Casino*, features not only the last title sequence that Bass would make before his death, but to many film-makers exhibited his best contemporary work. Some of this success may be due to a certain familiarity that Bass had come to enjoy with the director. After all, the title sequence for *Casino* was the fourth that Bass and his wife, Elaine, had made for Scorsese. Bass had already created the title sequences to Scorsese's three previous films, *Goodfellas*, *Cape Fear*, and *The Age of Innocence*. Scorsese has often said that he has been a longtime fan of Saul Bass's work and that he was "blown away" by the opening sequences to *The Man with the Golden Arm* and *Psycho*. In their work together, a mutual admiration developed between the two men. Scorsese, well known for his tight direction over even the slightest detail in his films, extended a hitherto unknown freedom to Bass. Said Bass, "Once we are agreed on a visual point of view, he gives us a great deal of freedom—almost total at times."

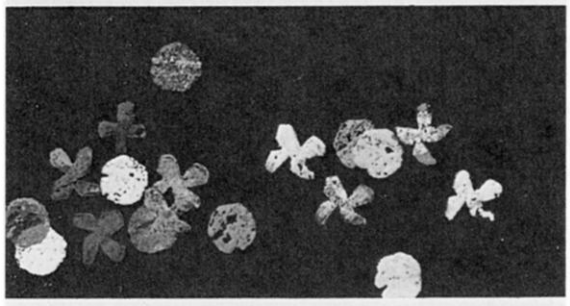
Bass's dream-like allegory for *Casino* begins just after the Robert De Niro character gets blown up at the film's open. The body of the protagonist takes flight, travelling upward through a sky of flames as if on its way to heaven. Yet Bass abruptly redirects the body of the gangster downward in a visually rivetting interpretation of Dante's descent into hell. Using various camera speeds, lens distortions, and superimposures, Bass manipulates images of casino marquee lights and other icons of Las Vegas nightlife to foreshadow the character's tragic journey within the film. Of his opening sequence, Bass commented, "We attempted to create a metaphor for the Las Vegas of betrayal, twisted morality, greed, hubris, and in the end, self-destruction."

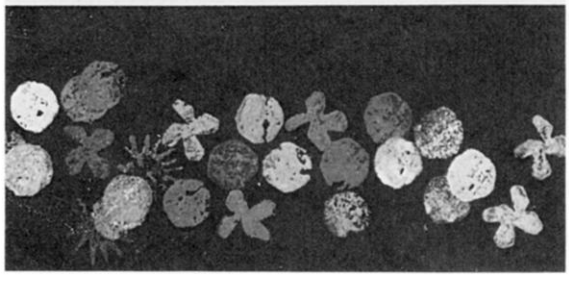
Bass, a graphic designer by trade, launched his film career in 1955 after having designed the print graphics for Otto Preminger's *The Man with the Golden Arm*. Bass's publicity design was so dramatic that Preminger asked him to create the film's opening title sequence. Bass went on to design titles, prologues, and epilogues for films such as *Anatomy of a Murder*, *Carmen Jones*, and *West Side Story*, and also to shoot and direct segments within films. These second-unit sequences have become cinematic mile-











stones in their own right; they include the final battle scene in *Spartacus*, all race sequences in *Grand Prix,* and the famed shower sequence in *Psycho*. In 1973 Bass directed the sci-fi feature *Phase IV*—a story about oversized, world-conquering ants. In all, Bass's list of credits includes over 60 films.

Saul Bass also began collaborating on film projects with his wife and partner, Elaine. They began making their own short films, and, in 1969, they won an Oscar for *Why Man Creates*, a combination of live action and animation which takes a philosophical look into man's creative impulse. Bass and his wife continued to make award-winning short films for the international festival circuit until his death at age 75 this past May.

PAMELA HASKIN: *You made 11 films with Otto Preminger, yet you remain best known for your work with Alfred Hitchcock on* Psycho, Vertigo, *and* North by Northwest.

SAUL BASS: Did I actually make 11 films with Preminger? After the sixth, I stopped counting. Otto had a vision. A true artistic, visual vision. He believed that he knew what he knew and he believed that what he knew, together with what would come out of our work, was worth defending to the death. He also had the bullheadedness to take that position and the clout to pull it off. Stanley Kubrick is that way too, but I don't know anybody else quite like it. There are many directors today who have enormous clout, but they don't have a graphic vision. They care about the advertising, but they don't start with a point of view. And if they have a point of view, they're not sure enough about it, or don't care enough to make a federal case out of it. You can see the result in the state of film graphics and advertising today. In many cases the advertising is quite effective, but ultimately, unmemorable.

When I began to do titles many many years ago—the dark ages, when designers lived in caves—I went through a very intense learning experience with some extraordinary film-makers. I'm referring to the Wylers, the Wilders, the Hitchcocks, and the Premingers. It was an extraordinary experience, cutting your eye teeth within that framework. So I began thinking about what to do at the beginning of a film. Obviously, the point of any title is to support the film. As you know, I created a lot of stuff, which, it would be fair to say, constituted a reinvention of the film title.

My initial thoughts about what a title could do was to set mood and to prime the underlying core of the

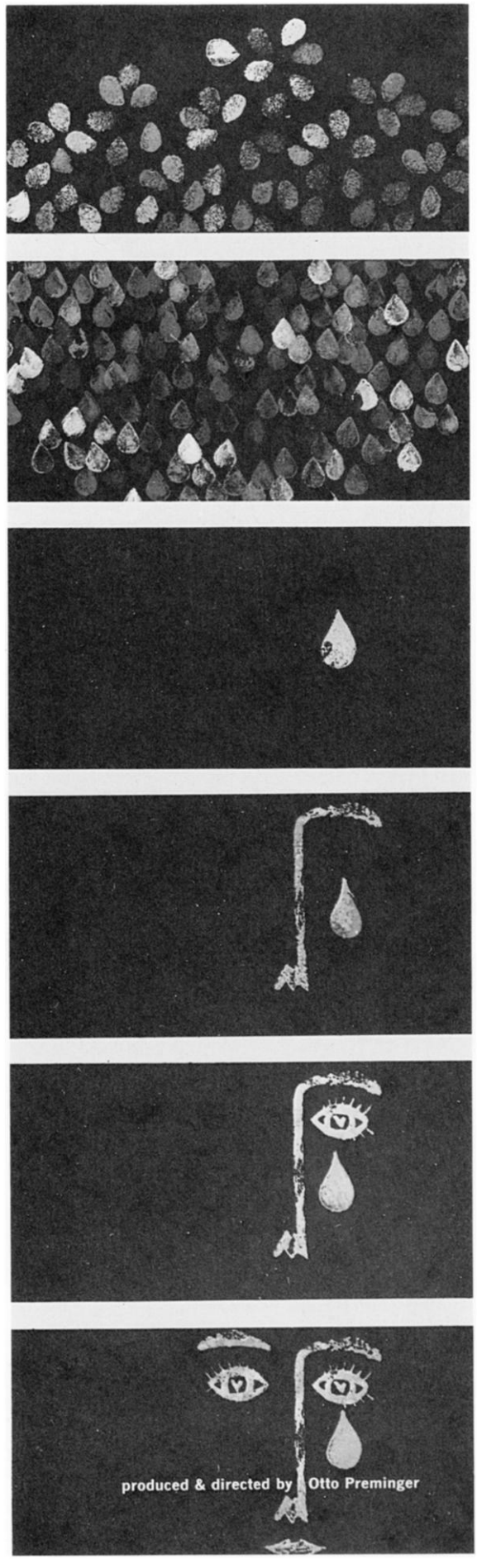
film's story; to express the story in some metaphorical way. I saw the title as a way of conditioning the audience, so that when the film actually began, viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it.

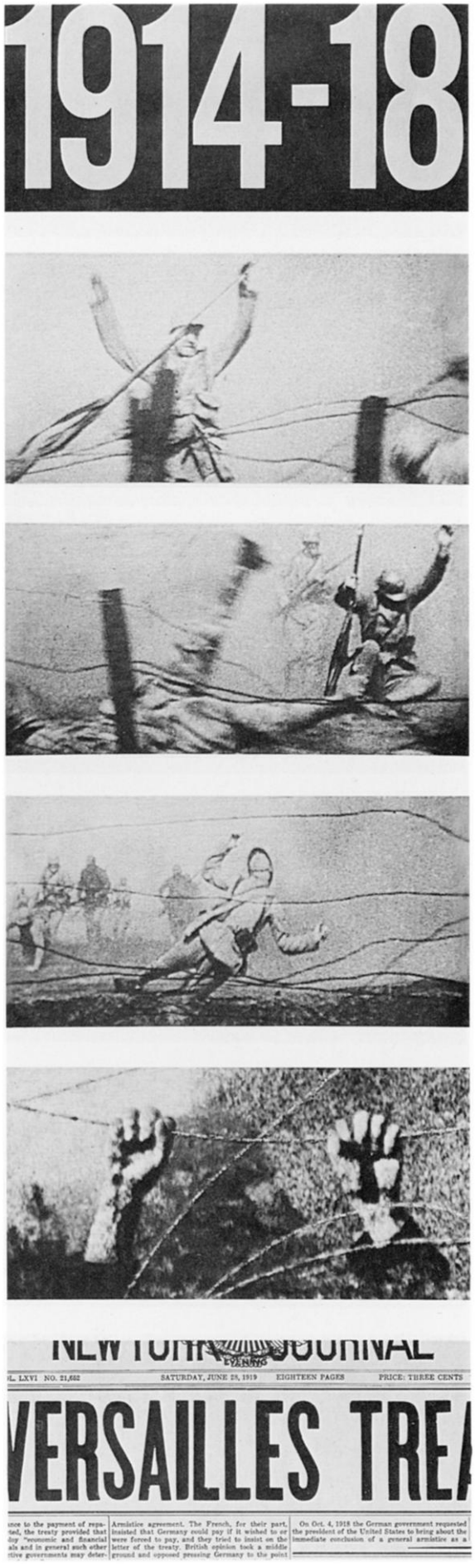
I had a strong feeling that films really began on the first frame. This was, of course, back when titles were strictly typography—mostly bad typography—and constituted the period when people were settling in, going to restrooms, or involved in chitchat. I just felt that this was a period that could work for the film. Otto Preminger agreed with me and we took a shot at it.

My actual entry into film began when Otto asked me to design a title for *The Man with the Golden Arm*. This opportunity grew out of my having designed the original graphic symbol for the film. The symbol for the film turned out to be about as difficult to accept as the film itself. It also broke from the general point of view about how you sold films. The notion that a single visual element, good, bad, or indifferent, could become a statement for a film is not a notion that existed before *The Man with the Golden Arm*. Before that period, almost all film ads, no, *all* film ads, used a potpourri approach. Advertisers threw everything into the pot, using the theory that, as a filmgoer, you would find something in the ad that would inspire you to see the film. I used to call this the "See, See, See" approach: See the missionaries boil in oil. See the virgins dancing in the temple of doom. See Krakatoa blow its top—that kind of thing. If you didn't like one image, you'd like another. The idea of having a film expressed within the framework of one single, reductive statement was a very daring notion in the 50s. It was a particularly scary notion for distributors and filmmakers alike. You were saying, of course, that you could make one statement that would be sufficiently provocative and true to the film, and that would sell the film. At the time, and this was to Otto's credit, he didn't flinch when this occurred.

What was the response to the limb which you designed to represent the addict in The Man with the Golden Arm*?*

The symbol of the arm was an expression of my general point of view, which is a reductive one. It just so happens that the arm achieved such a currency that when the film opened in New York, the symbol alone appeared on the marquee without the name of the film. This was a very powerful thing and really set the industry to thinking. The film did very well—for reasons that may or may not have had to do with the symbol. But understand that in the parlance of the film industry, if a film does well, naturally it's a great film.





If it does badly, it's the fault of the advertising campaign—everybody knows that. Otto, I have to say, truly believed that the graphic made a very important difference.

How did you decide to translate the arm into an animated sequence for the film's opening?

Otto and I looked at the arm. We thought that if it was correct for the ad campaign—and it was in the sense that its distorted form was a sort of metaphor for this disjointed, schizophrenic life of the addict—if it was in fact appropriate and powerful for that purpose, wouldn't it then be appropriate to have this image set up the mood at the beginning of the film? We agreed that it would.

But here's what happened. When I presented my storyboard for the film title to Otto, I naturally presented a series of static frames—a series of abstract bars that moved in configurations until, finally, they formed the arm. That was the title.

I presented this series of static images simply to show what the various configurations might be at any given moment. Otto looked at the series and thought it was terrific. He was very happy with it, but assumed that each independent image would remain static. I was horrified. I said, "No way!" We got into quite a fight. Words were exchanged and I stormed out of his office.

I've mellowed somewhat in recent years. However, if something I truly believe in is in danger of getting loused up, I will still resist to the death, without being inflammatory, of course.

I left Otto's office with a great sense of virtue, and returned to my office. I sat at my desk and calmed down a little bit. I began to think. . . . "Static images," I said to myself. There might be a certain kinetic effect with a series of staccato images—it might work. It might even be good. I began to like Otto's idea. The phone rang—it was Otto. "Saul," he said, "I've been thinking about it. You are right. The sequence must move!" "Wait a minute, Otto," I protested, "Your whole idea of the kinetic . . . " "No," he interrupted. "I insist!" He became very upset . We had another fight. Finally, he demanded, "THE TITLE MUST MOVE!" "O.K.," I said.

Here's the key of the thing. One might ask, "Why stay with a guy like this?" Did I need this? Curiously enough, the answer is "Yes." I discovered that what we wound up with together was better than what I started with on my own. Otto was a very tough and bullheaded kind of person. He was difficult and opinionated. In a funny way it worked for me. My world up

to that point had been reasonably polite and gracious. But with a guy like Otto, I had to learn how to fight.

I walked into every meeting prepared to quit—I had to. I had to become totally fearless, because if I entered into the room intending to preserve our relationship, I would have violated what I thought made sense and what was right. This resulted in some very volatile scenes. But I must say, to Otto's credit, he was always the one to make up. He would call me and say, "Saul, why are you so upset? Come by and have some breakfast."

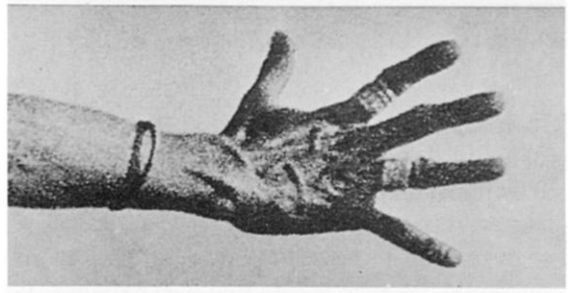
I am a little nostalgic about my relationship with Otto. After a while, after the sixth or seventh picture, I can't remember, the whole thing became a sort of ritualistic gavotte. We would have these enormous fights in which everybody got killed, but in which nobody died. It had a certain richness about it. I did a lot of good work.

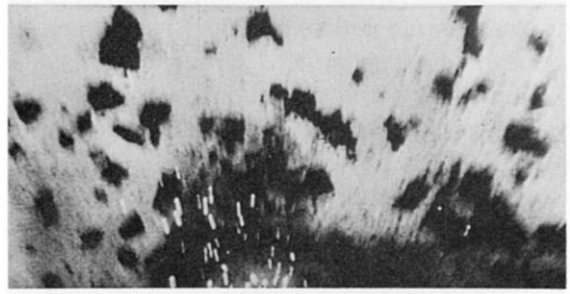
In The Man with the Golden Arm, *your animated title underscores the predicament and broken character of the main character in the film. Can you describe other ways in which you have used a main title sequence to support the dramatic narrative?*

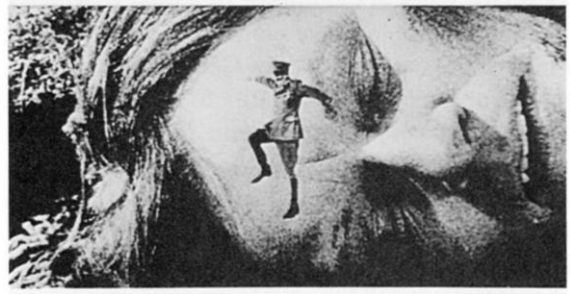
Having gone through all that with Preminger, I then asked myself whether the title could function in some other way. I experimented with having the title deal with the time "before" the film. I did that with William Wyler's *The Big Country*. There, I dealt with the three-month period before the story begins, in which Gregory Peck crosses the country in a stagecoach. This approach was extremely useful, not simply because it gave you background for the story, but because it contributed to your immediate, start-up understanding of the dramatic situation.

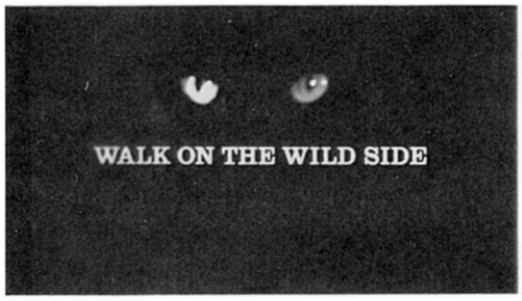
A key ingredient of this film was that this was a very isolated community in which there was a relative suspension of Law. Here, ideas of Law were embodied in simple perceptions of "fair" and "not fair." Law was made by individuals, not by a system of thinking based upon a canon of residual thought. So it was very important to convey how isolated and remote this community really was. I helped to set that up by projecting the notion of the amount of time and energy it took to get from the East Coast to this little territory in the West.

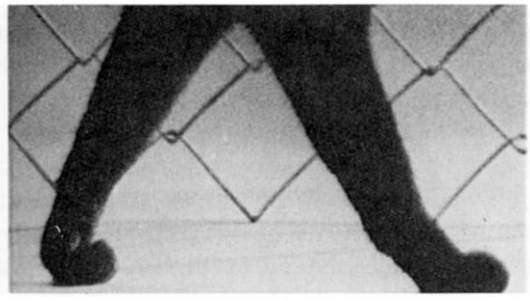
My technique was to use a series of contrasting conditions: I first set up extreme long shots of the stagecoach and juxtaposed these with extreme close-ups of the coach, the hooves of the horse, and the wheels, all of which were in furious activity. Then we cut to the tiny stagecoach moving an imperceptible











1/8 inch across the screen, signaled by a little expanding cloud of dust.

The constant intercutting of these two conditions reinforced the point of this title. What you got was a sense of the enormous energy it took to move you an infinitesimal distance across that vast expanse. When the stagecoach arrives in this community, you know that you're in the middle of "The Big Country." You understand the emptiness of the surround.

I used a similar approach in *The Victors*. For the title sequence, I created a montage of documentary footage and newsreel footage showing what life was like in Germany during the 25 years before the story began. The final image of the montage is Hitler's triumphant dance in Compiègne in 1940, after the defeat of France, which is when the story begins. We pick up the story in the middle of a march, which is in fact the final image of the montage. I wanted to create a sense of the inexorability of German history and the events leading to the Third Reich.

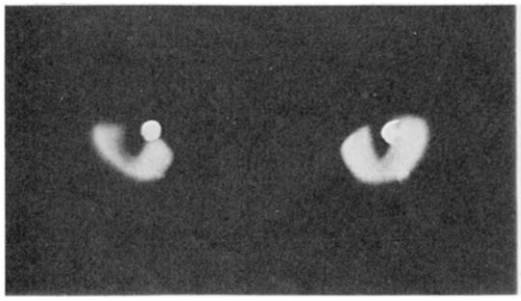
I used this technique again in my opening for Frankenheimer's *Grand Prix*. In this case, I dealt with the very moments before a Monte Carlo race. I was interested in what takes place in the preparations for the race. The tension. The anxiety. The little nervous technical adjustments and gestures that the drivers go through.

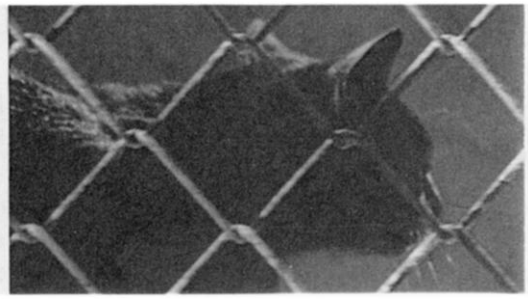
You've also directed special sequences within the films. How did these opportunities come about?

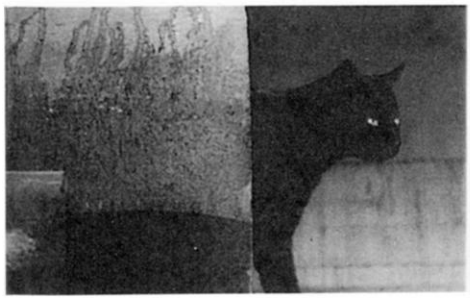
Well, what happened is that several directors came to me and asked me to get involved in the film itself. That's how the final battle in *Spartacus* came about. I also shot footage for Hitch on *Psycho*. I worked on the shower sequence, you know. My intent was to create a bloodless murder—the blood going down the drain at the end of the sequence was to be the only blood in the scene. Hitch then wanted to have a shot with a spray of blood on Janet's chest. He also insisted on the shot with the knife in her belly (which was actually a pull away from her belly, and then printed backwards). I felt these shots ruined the purity of the sequence. I was kind of astonished at my reaction, because Hitch was, after all, the great master.

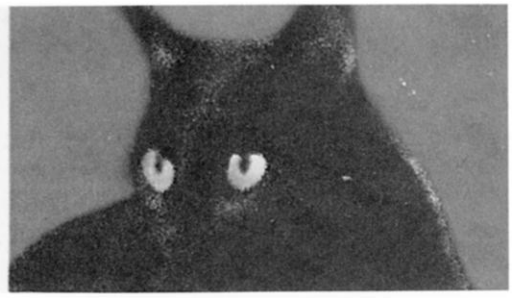
I also shot and directed all the races in *Grand Prix*. By this time, I had really begun to deal with the nature of imagery itself. I set the problem for myself that is probably the central creative problem in all communication forms—how to take ordinary experience, how to take things we know, and look at them in a way that enables us to see them anew. I did that in *Walk on the Wild Side* with the cats. The cat is an appropriate metaphor for a film about passions in a brothel. I used a black cat and a white cat—the pure and the impure. Cats prowl and fight, they conjure up the whole aspect of dark street life which is central to the story. I wanted the audience to look at a cat as though it were an exotic creature—a saber-toothed tiger, or a mammoth, or an animal they'd never seen before. The idea for the title was to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

I wanted them to recall what it was like to be a child, beyond one's earliest memory; to recall what it was like to look at this exotic animal, a cat, for the first time. I also used this idea in the film *9 Hours to Rama*,









in which I dealt with the notion of Time. I actually took the camera into the face of a clock, examining its surface and activity in ways that made you reconsider the Western construct of Time. These were the filmic issues with which I was wrestling and which were part of my learning process.

You've worked with the forefathers of American cinema. You now work with the generation of film-makers who grew up watching your films. How did this transition come about?

A few years ago several directors got in touch with Elaine and me and asked if we'd like to do some titles for them. One of them was Jim Brooks, another was Billy Crystal, and then Marty Scorsese. Marty saw a title we did for Jim Brooks on *War of the Roses*. He called us and said, "Saul, can you make me a title?" I said, "Marty, you bet your ass." We're now on our fourth picture with him—*Casino*. We're also doing an opening for a BFI/Channel 4 documentary called *A Personal Journey Through American Movies with Martin Scorsese*. Marty's doing a personal view of the films he encountered as he grew up and developed as a film-maker.

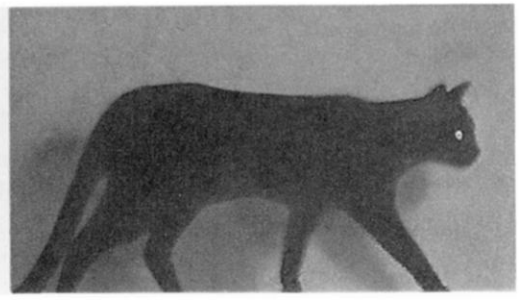
It's for TV so I made a very simple thing—a line caricature of Marty's profile. His eyebrows are positively aflame. I wanted to capture some of his great energy and magnetism.

You and Elaine continue to make award-winning short films. Why do you go on designing titles for other film-makers?

Our point of view is simply that we love doing titles because they are discreet. But there is one problem peculiar to titles. Titles are the last thing to be considered in the film production process. Unless the director and the producer, when they start out, really feel that having a title sequence is important, they don't have anything in the budget for it, except for some kind of mundane, mechanical thing. This is a problem, but it isn't a very big problem for Elaine and me, because the directors that we work with are interested enough in the beginning. They know they are going to get a dynamic title sequence, and know full well that it will take a few hours to do it! But in two or three months you have a nice little piece of film and you've been involved in a very dynamic process. Whereas even a short film is one or two years of work.

We love doing titles. We do them in a nice, obsessive way—we futz with them until we're happy and do things that nobody else will notice but us. We like the notion of the bottom of the table being finished even though nobody sees it. There's a Yiddish word for it, "meshugas," which is "craziness." I admire obsessiveness in others. It's there in Stanley Kubrick, who is an extraordinarily obsessive person. It drives everybody who works with him crazy, but that's O.K. That's the nature of the beast. I'm that way with people who work for me—I'm very obsessive and people who work for me think I'm a little meshuga.

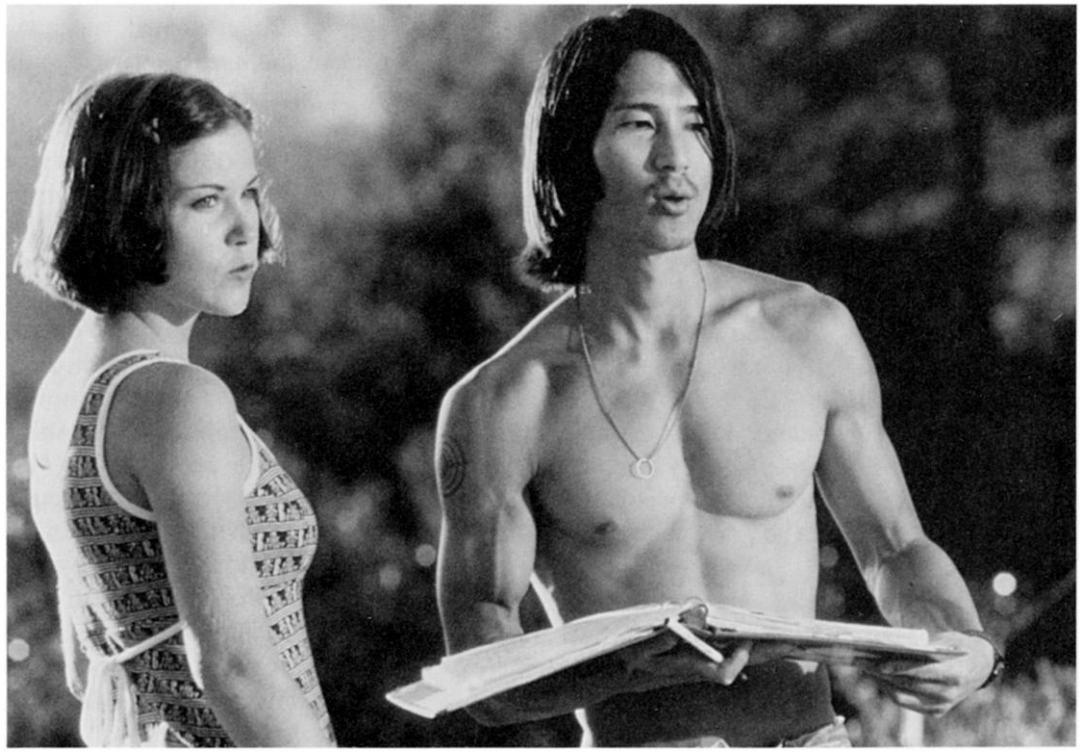
■ Pamela Haskin is a Los Angeles-based graphic designer specializing in motion graphics for film and television.



James M. Moran

Gregg Araki

Guerrilla Film-maker for a Queer Generation



Gregg Araki directs Christina Applegate

Upon its release in 1995, *The Doom Generation*, Gregg Araki's most recent feature, might have seemed at first glance a radical departure for an artist proclaimed a pioneer of the Queer New Wave. Distributed by Miramax, produced on a million-dollar budget with a crew and location permits, and subtitled "A Heterosexual Film by Gregg Araki," the motion picture seemed to proclaim a turning point in the film-maker's career, perhaps compromising the notorious shoot-and-run "guerrilla" techniques for which he has become famous, as well as departing from the homosexual themes and characters acclaimed for breaking new ground in gay cinematic representation. Such conjectures, however, would ultimately prove premature. For despite the polish of its imagery and its apparent focus upon straight sexuality, *The Doom Generation*, in both its form and its content, continued to develop Araki's unique aes-

thetic vision and critical gay voice, which together bind each of his films into a unified body of work. Indeed, it is precisely the precarious integrity of his position as a subversive independent, working with and against the conventions and practices of the mainstream industry, that marks his importance as a filmmaker.

Historically, Araki's contemporary status as an "outsider" in Hollywood can be traced to the West Coast underground movement that began in the late 1940s. As Richard Dyer notes, "the particular mix in L.A. of developed gay and film (in and outside of Hollywood) cultures made gay film a possibility and in part determined the shapes it took."[1] Not only were gay men hired to work behind and in front of the cameras in mainstream production, but the growth of homosexual pornography in Los Angeles further marked the city's increasingly gay profile. Although most early avant-garde film-makers rejected the gloss and clarity of Hollywood narratives, the 40s gay underground celebrated Hollywood's predilection for glamour, camp, and fantasy, while sharing a common pursuit with the popular film noir genre to "convey inner, often conflictual or disruptive, experiences, which can be taken as symptomatic of anomie and malaise or, alternatively, as a kind of revolt against the bland conformities of mainstream U.S. life."[2] More than 40 years later, Araki's dark, pessimistic works update these themes for the AIDS generation.

As a graduate of the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television, Araki also carries on the line of gay film-makers beginning with Kenneth Anger, Gregory Markopoulos, and Curtis Harrington, all of whom lived in Los Angeles and studied film in some capacity at USC. Anger and Markopoulos, in particular, were central to the development and definition of the underground tradition as a whole, marking out a space and an opportunity for gay men to represent themselves in films in a way that mainstream film-making did not.[3] Their concerns with personal identity, self-disclosure, and subversiveness continue to resonate with urgency in Araki's work, which borrows paradigmatic motifs of his predecessors.

One such motif is the isolated, suffering, "sad young man," perhaps best exemplified by Araki's *Long Weekend (O'Despair)* (1991),[4] in which Michael, a gay youth typically haunted by a nostalgic longing for the past, fails, over the course of a disappointing weekend reunion with old college chums, to recapture the camaraderie they once had shared. Another motif is the journey, in which the protagonists set out in search of themselves. *The Doom Generation*, for example, as both a twisted road flick and cinematic acid trip, chronicles the misadventures of Amy Blue (Rose McGowan), Jordan White (James Duval), and Xavier Red (Johnathon Schaech), three young Americans fleeing the neo-conservative climate of a consumer-saturated urban society in a desperate effort to find love and the freedom of unfettered sexual experimentation.

In each film, Araki articulates his continuity with the underground formally by allusion, particularly by his appropriation of gay and camp iconography. For example, in *The Living End* (1992), Jon (Craig Gilmore), a film critic despairing over his recent HIV-positive diagnosis, finds himself embroiled in a love-hate relationship with Luke (Mike Dytri), a descendent of the rebel icon characterized by the leather, muscle, and bravado of a Brando or Belmondo. Compared to a "lonesome cowboy" (a reference to the notorious film by Andy Warhol, whose poster graces a skull- and skeleton-decorated wall in Jon's apartment), Luke's character also evokes images reminiscent of *Scorpio Rising*, Kenneth Anger's film celebrating surrender to an attractive rebel whose homoeroticism is linked to the death drive. Having recently murdered three men and testing positive for HIV himself, gun-toting Luke literally manifests the latent implications of Anger's film as he proceeds to seduce Jon, who cannot resist him.

Araki's identification with the underground—although fundamental to his vision of society—has nevertheless been tempered by mainstream conventions. His films are neither autobiographical studies of a single gay consciousness that could be taken as his own, as in Anger's *Fireworks*, nor purely exterior depictions of the forms of gay sexuality, as in Warhol's *Blow Job*. Instead, his films more frequently appropriate and transform conventions and images of Hollywood productions into narratives that exploit them for their own subversive ends. For example, Araki describes the origin of *Long Weekend* as the result of "the abhorrence I felt towards the smug, yuppily-ever-after, 'don't worry be happy'-ism of Lawrence Kasdan's baby boomer epic, *The Big Chill*."[5] Similarly, *The Living End* and *The Doom Generation* rework the Hollywood subgenres of buddies, juvenile delinquency, and romantic outlaw couples on the run.

It must be emphasized, however, that Araki's current relationship with the mainstream in no way reflects his aspirations to emulate Hollywood's illusion of realism. In *Long Weekend*, for example, Michael

drops a copy of Bazin's *What Is Cinema?* in the trash within the film's first reel, and in *The Living End*, Jon is working on an article entitled "The Death of Cinema." Godard, in fact, is perhaps the figure most representative of Araki's conception of the independent who can work within the institution of cinema in order to change it. The disjointed techniques of Godard's early work, in particular *Breathless* and *Weekend*, are evident in Araki's films, as is the interminable banality of faceless locales pocked with strip malls, fast food joints, and deserted parking lots, disturbed only by the aimless wanderings of anomic urban neurotics. Together, the protagonists' names in *The Living End* are Jon Luke, and if that weren't enough, a "Made in U.S.A." poster adorns Jon's bedroom. While these Godardian touches are at times more precocious than provocative, Araki's narrative experiments do find fruition in *Totally F***ed Up* (1994), a diary-like compendium that records the everyday hopes and frustrations of a close circle of gay and lesbian teens, as well as their somewhat jaundiced views of the culture on whose margins they find themselves surviving.

Breaking the narrative into 15 random celluloid fragments intercut with first-person video essays and intertitles, Araki successfully crafts a form whose Brechtian disruptions mirror his adolescent characters' alienation from their social milieu. Like the city of Los Angeles in which the film is set, the narrative is constructed heterogenously, a puzzling mix of images and events held up for the viewer to negotiate, a mise-en-scène at once soliciting and frustrating the prospect of engagement with its empty facades broken by ellipses of time and space.

Like Godard, Araki has been able to control virtually every aspect of his craft, generally writing, casting, directing, photographing, and editing each of his works—that is, until *The Doom Generation*, for which he hired a D.P. (Jim Fealy), a production designer (Therese Deprez), and SAG actors. This graduation to more industrial production methods should not, however, be interpreted as a transition to some newfound aesthetic. Indeed, from the black-and-white grain of *Three Bewildered People in the Night* (1987)[6] and the hand-held low-resolution video of *Totally F***ed Up,* to the bloody reds, fiery oranges, and neon greens of *The Doom Generation,* Araki has consistently composed each of his films from rigorous storyboards, framing his characters amidst the surreal detritus of road signs, billboards, and bumper stickers whose ironically witty juxtapositions of printed word and image often speak louder than his dialogue. Recycling and recombining images and angles from film to film, Araki has been able to achieve a remarkable intertextuality within his oeuvre, constructing a cinematic universe with an atmosphere and logic unique to his sensibility. Thus, a bigger budget and professional crew distinguish *Doom* only in enabling Araki to realize that sensibility at a greater level of ambition: "Even if I were to make a 50-million-dollar movie, because my personality is very strong, it would be a high-budget Gregg Araki film. I'm not too concerned about being sucked up into making faceless movies."[7]

At this stage in his career, therefore, a fundamental issue for the director is the relationship of his independent status to the mainstream Hollywood product: "Any 'Independent' Film that reinforces and buys into the values of the Mainstream is an opportunity wasted."[8] For example, in *The Living End*, when Luke kills off two gay bashers clad in T-shirts that read "Drugstore Cowboy" and "sex, lies, and videotape," Araki seems to imply that the films of independents such as Van Sant or Soderbergh, acclaimed by the popular press and bourgeois critical establishment, may ultimately be reappropriated by a set of values that they had initially set out to oppose.

Struggling for artistic originality, Araki demands that a new generation of film-makers voice contemporary concerns:

> What The Movement (which again, does not exist) really needs are those formal/political/thematic challengers of the Status Quo. . . . I'm talking about the next generation of Godards, Fassbinders, Derek Jarmans who push the envelope, who are not satisfied with the "Good Story Well Told" Bullshit that Mainstreams of all stripes and colors unabashedly endorse.[9]

Yet as his reliance on allusion and revision illustrates, Araki's postmodern signature style paradoxically depends on a pastiche of his predecessors, as illustrated by the title of a course he has taught at UC Santa Barbara: "Independent-Guerrilla-Underground-American New Wave-Neorealist Cinema."

The Gloom Generation

Araki's postmodern and queer sensibilities are coupled by an alienated consciousness. If his films' formal qualities are marked by pastiche, his

The Doom Generation

protagonists are characterized by a shallowness of feeling. Bored, disenfranchised, cynical, and inert, the young men and women of Araki's post-punk, post-Reagan America are slackers not so much by free choice but by loss of hope. The illustrative titles, *Long Weekend (O'Despair)* and *The Living End*, refer to forms of suspended animation, to inner states of emotion condemned to poverty, fragmentation, and ennui mirrored in the bleak, bizarre, postindustrial California landscape. Not merely offering another hommage to the existentialism of French and Italian New Wave films of the 50s and 60s, Araki grounds his angst in the "complete fuckedupness of my hopelessly lost generation."[10] In *The Living End*, for example, Jon hangs a sign that reads "My Degeneration," and records a diary called "Notes from Oblivion." And two of the fragments of *Totally F***ed Up* are introduced by intertitles reading "The Decline of Stupid Fucking Western Civilization" and "The Alienation Generation."

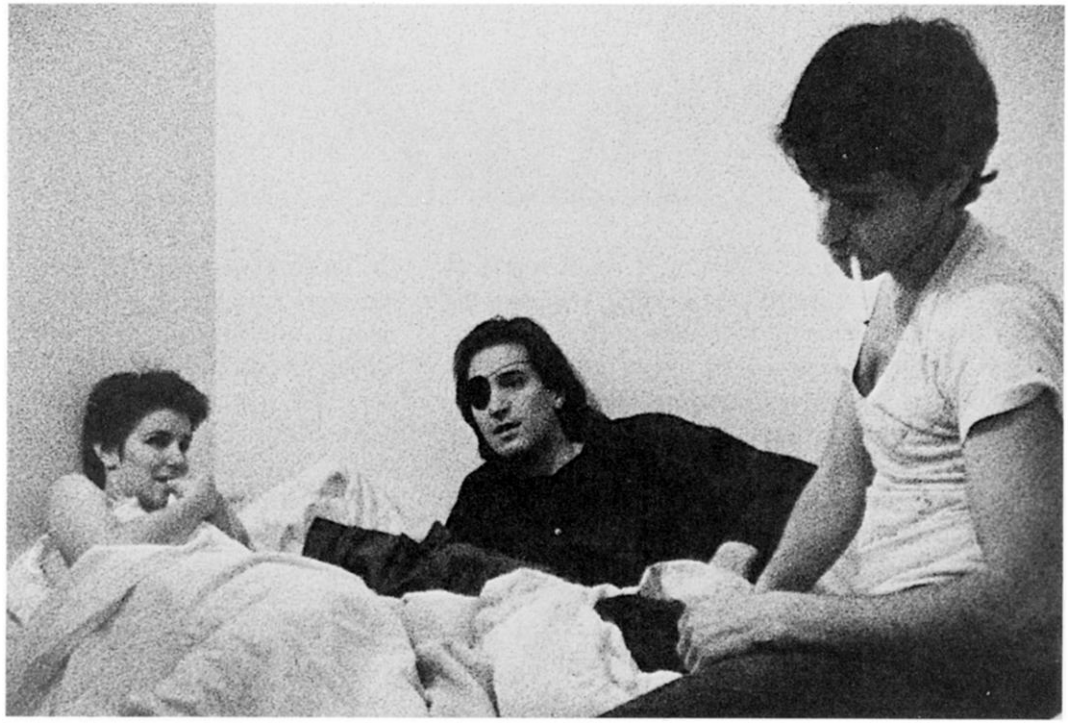
The Doom Generation, of course, speaks plainly for itself; its Zeitgeist can be summed up in the popular slogan, "We are all living with AIDS," the disease that is at the epicenter of Araki's universe, that transforms gay sex into a metaphor for suicide, that cautions against risk, that just says no to pleasure. A recurring refrain in Araki's films, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life," is drained of any optimism in the face of a vacuous or terminal future. Ironically, the loose lifestyle of the Beats, for whom drugs and sex were a utopian mode of liberation from the dullness, conformity, and frustration of the conventional world, has itself become yet another source of weariness and sickness for Araki's protagonists. As Jon sarcastically muses in *The Living End*: "Live fast, die young, leave a beautiful corpse . . . yeah, right." While Araki's characters frequently assert that sex is overrated, in their consumer culture supersaturated with mediated images of sex they are equally obsessed by it. Even as they look forward to adult sexual experiences, their anticipation is marred by the prospect of illness and death on the horizon.

The contemporary dystopia which AIDS has created for Araki's characters evokes their nostalgia for a simpler past. Michael and his friends, for example, cannot seem to recapture the vigor that enlivened their college days, as their enervated relationships decay over the course of *Long Weekend*. Tommy, the most promiscuous teenager in *Totally F***ed Up,* is both criticized and envied by his peers as "living in the 70s" or "the good old days." And in *The Living End*, Luke complains to Jon: "We're the victims of the sexual revolution. The generation before us had all the fun, and we get to pick up the fuckin' tab." Luke's bitterness is a reflection of the teleological schema of contemporary gay American history invoked by various cultural agencies, one which provides a historical frame of reference for Araki's work.

This schema periodizes the Gay Liberation Movement into three phases separated by two events: the 1969 Stonewall Tavern Riot in New York and the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic in 1981. Phase I is marked by repression, Phase II by promiscuity, and Phase III by disease. Moral discourses have tended to construct a direct cause and effect relationship between these phases, proclaiming Phase III or AIDS as the punishment for the bacchanalia of Phase II. The activist response to the disease is organized around the notion that, if AIDS is not the punishment of a God taking his revenge on the heathen (as in *Lot in Sodom*), then it is nonetheless that of a government doing the same thing.[11]

epidemic and in many of their strategies have stressed death and annihilation, as well as evoking holocaust and genocide analogies.[12]

Araki's politics seem to concur with these activist discourses; at the same time, however, his characters flirt with the nihilism on which these strategies have been based. *The Living End* is dedicated to "the thousands who've died and the thousands more who'll die because of a big White House full of Republican Fuckheads." In the film, Luke suggests to Jon that they go to Washington and blow out George Bush's brains, or better yet, inject him with some of their blood, because then, surprise, there would be "a magic cure by tomorrow." Luke wants to destroy the Establish-



Three Bewildered People in the Night

Contemporary gay liberation theory has had to revise its "politics of pure principle," which had previously stressed the utopian, revolutionary potential of sexual promiscuity to create a harmonious community of homosexual brothers. As expressed by Luke, age has currently become an important axis of distinction, dividing older men ravaged by illness from younger men hoping to avoid infection. As AIDS further fractured the community along ethnic and racial lines, gay activists, rather than retreating into passivity and isolation, came together as a collective in accusing the government of criminal negligence in dealing with the

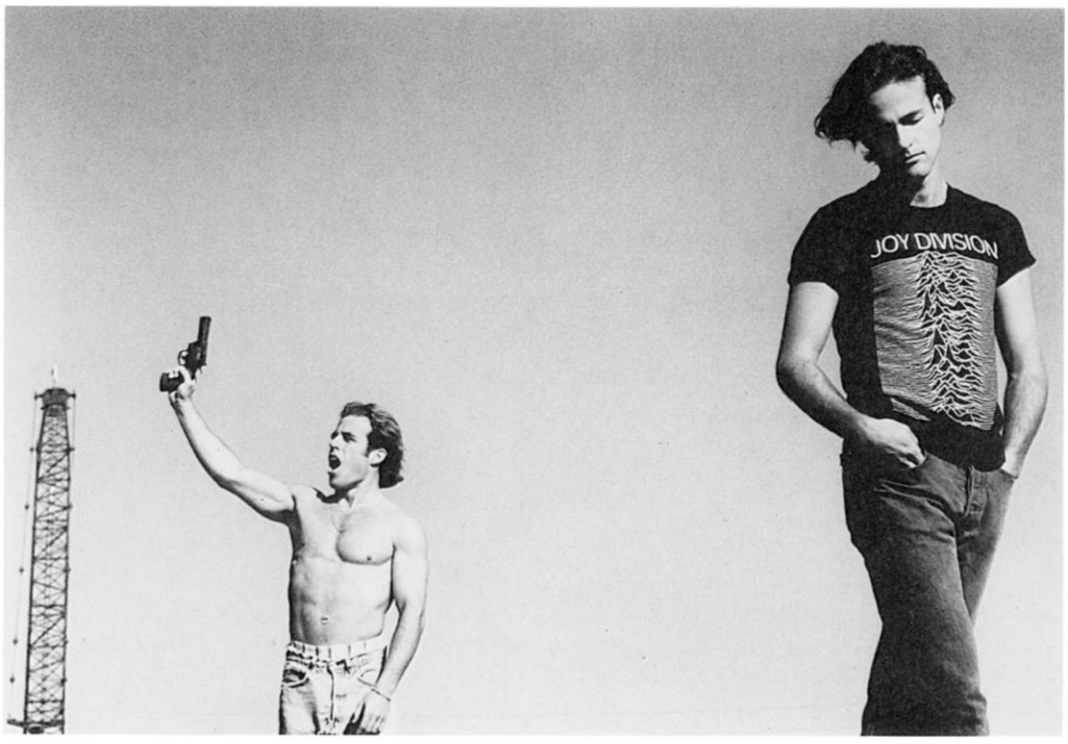
ment that has destroyed him, but his radicalism, it would seem, is driven not by any rational agenda, but by a desperate euphoria: "Don't you see it, we're totally free." Condemned to the margins of society by his HIV status and deviant sexuality, Luke plays the outlaw, foregoing politics in favor of frenzied anarchy: "Fuck work, fuck the system, fuck everything!" Such a stress on the individual self is anathema to collective notions of identity. With barely each other to turn to, Luke and Jon are left despairing in the limbo of a terminal existence, a doomed middle without resolution in either a narrative or political sense.

Queer Politics or Political Inertia?

Araki's cynicism points ambivalently between political critique and nihilistic abandon. The horrific and gory climax of *The Doom Generation*, for example, in which Jordan is fatally castrated by a gang of neo-Nazi thugs as punishment for his near consummation of a homoerotic attraction to Xavier, is resolved only by a brief epilogue in which, reinstated as a "couple" purely by default as a result of Jordan's death, Amy and Xavier drive aimlessly into a bleak horizon and an unknown future. Although fierce in its implicit attack upon a conservative American society condoning only heterosexuality at the violent expense of all other unconventional unions (thus explaining the irreverent irony of *Doom*'s subtitle), the film's politics function primarily as subtext, averting an explicit confrontation of the causes of institutionalized homophobia by hyper-dramatizing its hideous effects in an over-the-top display of savagery. Identifying so strongly with the frustrated idealism of his adolescent characters, whose vision of the world he deeply shares,[13] Araki revels in the premature fantasy of martyrdom typical of troubled teens. Nowhere is an alternative imagined. Perhaps Fredric Jameson speaks for those activists who cannot accommodate such a postmodern, nihilistic sensibility with a need for political efficacy, when he writes:

> For political groups which seek actively to intervene in history and to modify its otherwise passive momentum . . . there cannot but be much that is deplorable and reprehensible in a cultural form of image addiction which . . . effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project, thereby abandoning the thinking of future change to fantasies of sheer catastrophe and inexplicable cataclysm—from visions of terrorism on the social level to those of cancer on the personal.[14]

However compelling this argument might be, Araki has always been one step ahead of his critics, anticipating and mocking any "politically correct" attempts to label or dismiss his sexual politics. For example, by subtitling *The Living End* as "An Irresponsible Film by Gregg Araki," the director flaunts his representations of gay promiscuity, unprotected anal intercourse, and S & M in an era of safe sex and its mandates. Rather than advocating its depicted



The Living End

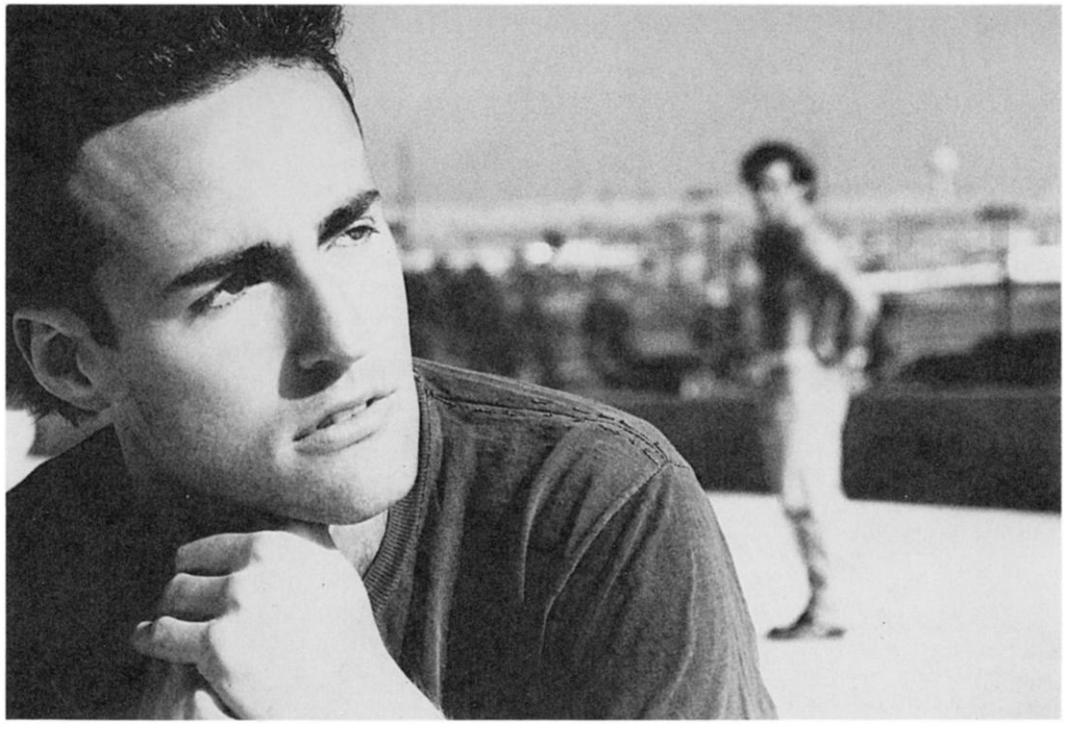
behaviors, the film questions the politics of responsibility itself, which endorse self-control for the individual homosexual in the absence of government support and intervention. As Richard Dyer explains, "The more perverse the sexuality, the more it strays from the norms of a hidebound society, then the more potent it is liable to be."[15]

Although the characters in his films may frequently appear "negative" or "stereotypical," Araki recasts them in a gay-centered universe, and thus liberates them from their function as "Other" typical of straight Hollywood productions. Araki treats queers as legitimate subjects in and of themselves, recognizing queer stereotypes not as measures of heterosexual normalcy, but as models for queer youth to exploit for their own sense of identity. He inverts the conventional paradigm of the homosexual narrative as subcultural and connotative by making it dominant and denotative. Thus, for example, the notorious gay subtexts in the performances of Marlon Brando or James Dean come out of the cinematic closet in the figures of Xavier in *Doom* or Luke in *The Living End*. In other words, characters in the past who had only been objects of negotiated readings have become subjects of their own stories, and in the process they gain a representational authority. In more theoretical terms, Araki's films work with and against narrative codes and conventional forms of enunciation which "produce modes of representing that effectively alter the standard frame of reference and visibility, the conditions of the visible, what *can* be seen and represented."[16]

Araki confirms that "there is a genuine need for the under- and mis-represented to identify themselves via the cinema machine."[17] It should come as something of a surprise, then, that as an Asian-American, Araki has represented predominantly white gay men in his films. Richard Fung, a gay Asian-American film-maker, has questioned the efficacy of such practices:

> If we look at commercial gay sexual representation, it appears that the antiracist movements have had little impact: the images of men and male beauty are still of *white* men and *white* male beauty. These are the standards against which we compare both ourselves and often our brothers—Asian, black, native, and Latino. Although other people's rejection (or fetishization) of us according to the established racial hierarchies may be experienced as oppressive, we are not necessarily moved to scrutinize our own desire and its relationship to the hegemonic image of the white man.[18]

For Fung, it would seem, the politics of representation are more than just a matter of access and alter-



The Living End

natives to mainstream production. He suggests that a film-maker's Asian-American sensibility, his critical frame of reference, the vernacular traditions of his heritage, and the family dynamics of his upbringing make it undesirable, perhaps impossible, to stand outside of his historical identity during the creative process.[19]

In self-defense, Araki embraces his identity as a "card-carrying . . . member of two . . . 'oppressed' subcultural groups,"[20] but disdains the xenophobic response to his work when exhibited within these constituencies. Like Isaac Julien, whose *Looking for Langston* has been criticized in African-American quarters for its elision of racial issues in the pursuit of homoerotic themes, Araki has resisted the demand to carry the burden for a diversity of marginalized, underrepresented communities. He contends that such pressure smacks of PC and its concomitant conformity to formulaic prescription:

> I've found "my" subcultures to be more repressive, more straitjacketing, more tunnel-visioned than the Majority culture they so relentlessly and demonstratively attack. . . . They are subscribing to and ultimately wholeheartedly embracing the very restrictive stereotypes that the White Patriarchal hegemony foists upon us. There is room, in fact there is a dire need, for difference within our claustrophobic little elitist clubhouses. The pitfalls of generic stagnancy in gay, Asian American, and independent cinema(s) are not being avoided.[21]

Even so, with the release of *Totally F***ed Up*, which features a multi-ethnic cast of players with Latino, African-American, and Asian backgrounds, Araki seems to have accommodated some of his critics for the time being—not that he subscribes to any notion of cinematic "realism" or of simple character "identification." In fact, Araki has described the cast as "completely interchangeable. The ethnicity of the characters was like wardrobe, essentially."[22] Whether gays of color can conceive of their identities as mix-and-match compatibles may depend upon their commitment to a platform of identity politics seemingly at odds with Araki's queer film-making practice that denies essential difference in a postmodern, post-structuralist world.

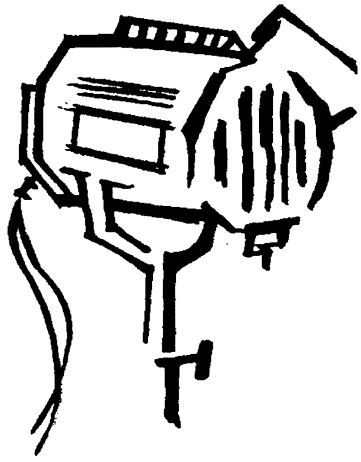
This debate, whose urgency cannot be denied, continues to find its expression primarily in polemical rhetoric rather than in any definitive political agenda. At this stage in his career, Gregg Araki seems less concerned with positive role models or democratic representation than he is with subverting the bourgeois imperatives that demand them in the first place. Like Luke in *The Living End*, who rejects a regressive return to an "everything's normal hunky-dory life," yet cannot envision a positive alternative for the future, Araki revels in his identity as a self-proclaimed iconoclast.

■ James M. Moran is a doctoral candidate in the School of Cinema-Television at the University of Southern California.

Notes

1. Richard Dyer, "Underground and After," *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 105.
2. Ibid., pp. 115–16.
3. Ibid., p. 104.
4. Araki's second feature, which was awarded the 1989 L.A. Critics' Prize for Best Independent Feature.
5. Gregg Araki, "The (Sorry) State of (Independent) Things," *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts*, ed. Russell Leong (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Visual Communications, Southern California Asian American Studies Central, 1991), p. 68.
6. Araki's first feature, which was awarded the Bronze Leopard, Critics' Prize, and Young Jury Cinema Award at Locarno.
7. Interview with Gregg Araki, August 1995.
8. Araki, p. 69.
9. Ibid., p. 70.
10. Ibid., p. 68.
11. For the clarity of this schema, I am indebted to Rich Cante. See his "Psychoanalysis, Temporality, and HIV Narrative: The Case of *The Living End*," forthcoming in *Cinema Journal*.
12. Stuart Marshall, "The Contemporary Political Use of Gay History," in *How Do I Look: Queer Film and Video*, ed. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), p. 89.
13. Discussing *Nowhere*, the third installment of his apocalyptic "teen trilogy" (the others are *Totally F***ed Up* and *The Doom Generation*), Araki was candid about this identification: "I like making movies about teenagers. There's something monumental and heightened about their hormone-mad lives—like they get a zit and the world ends. They live and die ten times a day. They are idealists in a soulless world. For now, at least, they're interesting subjects and express how I feel about the world." Interview with Araki, August 1995.
14. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984), p. 85.
15. Dyer, p. 118.

16. Teresa de Lauretis, "Film and the Visible," in *How Do I Look*, p. 224.
17. Araki, p. 69.
18. Richard Fung, "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn," in *How Do I Look*, p. 149.
19. Richard Fung, "Center the Margins," in *Moving the Image,* pp. 62–67.
20. Araki, p. 69.
21. Ibid., p. 69.
22. Quoted in Lawrence Chua, "Profiles and Positions," *BOMB* (Fall 1992), p. 27.



In Darkest Hollywood

Exploring the Jungles of Cinema's South Africa

Peter Davis

Davis, an independent filmmaker, examines early depictions of South Africa—a white man's playground of diamonds, gold, and Zulus—that became part of the culture of Imperialism which helped sustain the politics of apartheid.

270 pages, paper $19.95

Available at your local bookseller or by calling (312) 568-1550.

Ohio University Press / Athens, Ohio 45701

NELL SHIPMAN

"BACK TO GOD'S COUNTRY"

Northwoods girl turns tigress, tames man & beast, bests all the beastly villains—it's classic Nell Shipman in a film twice remade by Hollywood!

Shipman's classic epic film—an international hit based on a memorable wilderness story by James Oliver Curwood—author of ***The Bear****—from original, tinted prints formatted for television with new score by Lindsay Cooper!*

Rediscovered, restored by D.J. Turner of the National Archives of Canada, ***Back to God's Country*** has had triumphant festival debuts at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (Pordenone), Musée D'Orsay (Paris), Museum of Modern Art (New York), and the Toronto Film Festival. ***Back to God's Country,*** one of five Shipman films available from the Idaho Film Collection, establishes Shipman as one of our most important early women filmmakers.

75-minute VHS tape $19.95 (plus $3 shipping & handling). Mail checks, money-and-purchase orders payable Idaho Film Collection to:

Idaho Film Collection
Bookstore (Attn: Pat)
Boise State University
Boise, ID 83725 USA

Reviews

Antonia's Line

Writer/director: Marleen Gorris. Producer: Hans de Weers. Cinematographer: Willy Stassen. Music: Ilona Sekacz. First Look Pictures.

Marleen Gorris's new Dutch/Flemish film is a feminist fable about creating a parallel power structure in the kind of village it takes to raise a child. Its resources and inspirations derive from Flemish painting, however, and share the aim of that tradition: the conquest of the visible world. If in the late Middle Ages the task of the artist was to reveal macabre demons at work, the modern artist's world is riddled with hidden sexist traps. It is Gorris's intimation of worlds beyond our own, combined with her unblinking acceptance of human pain and labor, that makes her the artistic heir of Pieter Brueghel.

Gorris succeeds in depicting "Feminismo" on a scale as epic as that of Brueghel's *Triumph of Death*, that painting of industrious skeletons, or *Dulle Griet (Mad Meg)*, his painting of shrewish women. Gorris may disagree with Brueghel's implicit sexism, but she is his match in a detailed rendering of the triumph over human madness and death. Gorris's purpose is to depict the abundant virtues of women, defying an Antwerp proverb often quoted in relation to Brueghel's work: "One woman makes a din, two women trouble, three an annual market, four a quarrel, five an army, and against six the Devil himself has no weapon." *Antonia's Line* features six major female roles: Antonia begat Danielle begat Therese begat Sarah, and they hold out a lifeline to dim-witted DeeDee and fecund Letta.

Gorris's depiction of daily chores recalls Brueghel's quotidian realism. In this matriarchal passion play, the utopian agenda depends upon the filmmaker drawing each character as a well-delineated, unique creature of contradictions—wrinkled and wracked and worthy of the ennobling portraits of Flemish peasants. Our Antonia (the statuesque Willeke van Ammelrooy) has a farm in the Netherlands, but she is not a patrician plantation owner.

Antonia and her brood never shrink before the backbreaking labor of agricultural life. Several sequences of the film celebrate agrarian necessities—pouring from heavy milk cans, mending fences, cutting and bundling hay—which all invoke the crafty minutiae in Brueghel's *Haymaking—July*, *The Peasant Dance*, and *The Netherlandish Proverbs*, to name a few. That the seasonal concerns of humans are dictated by the land is the point of departure for both the painter and the film-maker.

Brueghel's idiom is loud and clear in a scene where Antonia's daughter Danielle happens upon vicious farmhand Pitte raping DeeDee in a dark barn: the sin takes shape as muffled cries of human suffering become figures first grappling in the gloom, then, in all clarity, bent over a cart. The camera rushes in for a close-up of Pitte's hand clamped over DeeDee's mouth and then to her hand squeezing her eyeglasses into her flesh—the shattered glass serving as the objective correlative of defiled innocence (reminiscent of the use of symbols from Bosch to Van Eyck).

Much later, in a nocturnal scene, Antonia drives the rapist from the pub at gunpoint, cursing him with imagery that raises visions of a Bosch painting. She prophesies that his tongue will turn to puss, his entrails dissolve into mud, his brain crawl with serpents, should he ever return. Then a Rembrandt-dark sobriety envelopes the scene as the village men come from the pub, circle the rapist, then pummel and beat him until he is another dark lump in a pool of light descending from a lantern in the archway of the village gates.

The density of the village square squeezes our attention into the foreground where, in a scene worthy of Cain and Abel through the eyes of Brueghel, the rapist's brother comes to help him to the well. Alone by the water, the brother holds Pitte's head under until his body succumbs. The time it takes for the body to stop flailing impresses upon us the cruelty of justice—and death.

Gorris also owes a debt to the atmospheric perspective developed through the history of Dutch landscape painting. She repeatedly explores spatial relations in a stately, slow long shot of a round-rumped horse bearing the mother-earthly Antonia down a winding road through the village. Here we find the unlimited depth and sweeping panoramas that flow out of the long tradition of Dutch painting. Gorris's camera is at the end of a line that began with the Ghent Altarpiece (c. 1432) and gave rise to the 17th-century landscapes of Peter Paul Rubens and

New parents and children join the family

Jacob van Ruisdael. Dutch towns in deep focus under looming overcast skies with tokens of man's efforts in the foreground—a plow, a cow, a canal—are a proud tribute to the flat fields of Flanders under eternal cultivation, part of the message of *Antonia's Line*.

This "loam and gloam" of Dutch landscapes informs Gorris's cinematic structure; she keeps cutting back to the Belgian countryside between the dramatic episodes that guide us, like beads on a rosary, through 50 years of late-20th-century sexual politics. Here we find the film's premise, implicit as well in those Dutch landscapes: that the land outlives our politics. Like punctuation marks within the visual narrative, the landscapes are reinforced by a narration as lapidary as the New Testament: "Time gave birth again and again and produced nothing but itself" and "Antonia planted, Danielle painted."

Antonia's Line is not just a movie that happens to draw on artistic tradition. It declares its concern with art in an exquisite moment inspired by Vermeer. Danielle sits in a quiet corner of the kitchen bent over her drawing of a pitcher, pear, and apple on a wooden table suffused in Delft blue. She tells her mother, "There is so much I need to learn." Before you can say chiaroscuro, Danielle is off to art school. But she soon returns, for the real lessons of painting are in her own rural community, a world relatively unchanged since it was apprehended by the literal mind of Brueghel as he struggled to revive the Bosch mystical idiom. Surprisingly, Gorris's feminism turns out to have a mystical streak of Bosch, but she shares Brueghel's flat-footed joy in peasant life.

Magical moments are given to the painter Danielle, who has a gift for seeing through the material structures of life to the expression of the spirit itself. In the opening funeral sequence, we watch from her point of view Antonia's almost ludicrously wild-eyed mother rise out of her coffin to rail against men (first-phase feminism?). Danielle sees a stone angel in the village graveyard whack a priest with its wing; she sees a pretty blonde schoolteacher transformed into Botticelli's Venus in a moment of love-at-first-sight. Gorris employs these fantastic moments in order to show us the power of art to elicit from the material world its potential for change. This is the power of the fable inside the film; this is the activity of its heroines.

Gorris's unabashed Feminismo incorporates contemporary moral dilemmas in order to show us how the matriarchal Antonia will carve out a realm of freedom in a farm of her own. At the end of the Second World War, Antonia returns to her village, marching past graffiti reading "Welkom to Our Liberators." The Allied flags never bring the Allies, however, and Antonia and her line prove to be far more liberating.

When Danielle's biological clock starts buzzing for a baby, Antonia takes her to town to investigate stud service. Here we have a frank inversion of the standard by which women become sex objects—the salient difference being that Danielle doesn't pursue copulation for pleasure but, rather, to procreate. When Bas, Antonia's neighbor, a widower with four sons, offers to combine their farms and let Antonia take over the mothering of his sons, she gently refuses. Much later, she amends Bas's proposal to accommodate sexual relations, but first they must build a neutral location on the border between their farms. The message is clear: parallel lives provide more freedom and fun.

An uninhibited Rubenesque love scene is a kind of set piece for the lesbian love of Danielle and the schoolteacher—to be seen as equally valid and no less seasonal than the other three couples. The curvaceous flesh, bouncing and rolling, is as irresistible as the summer sun. But in this film the bed is no more important than the board. Frequent shots of the family gathered outdoors around a long table show the family expanding—eventually to encompass the village. Our Antonia takes in the native and the foreigner, the firm and the infirm, on a farm as self-contained and impervious to the tragedies beyond them as the one painted by Brueghel in the *Fall of Icarus*.

Antonia presides over and alleviates everyone's misfortunes. She rides by on her dray horse, silently seeing the simpleton Loony Lips mistreated by his master. Even in the wandering mind of Loony Lips, she represents an attractive alternative, and the lad turns his wheelbarrow to follow her. When the village priest thunders Old Testament morality at the Jezebels in his pews, Antonia leads a contingent to expose his dirty little liaison in the confessional. Thereafter his sermons espouse New Testament tolerance and forgiveness. Antonia is a feminist by example, and her live-and-let-live philosophy restores the promise of humanist feminism.

Working in the dominant art forms of their eras, Gorris and Brueghel share the conviction that in their creations, they are obliged to provide moral instruction and visual imperatives. Certainly Brueghel captured the overwhelming concerns of late medieval Europe: temptations of the flesh, our persecution by leering devils, and the impending Last Judgement. In turn, Gorris marches us through 20th-century feminism: Marxist blather from a man-on-the-make in a college pub, finding someone to father our children, facing the great dilemma of "choice," and finding ways to reconcile traditional role-playing. Ultimately, her Antonia negotiates a better relationship with the men of the village, stands up to the leering devils at the

Part of *Antonia's Line*'s extended family

local pub, and even embraces the philosophical agony of Crooked Finger, a gnarled, stinky hermit loved and respected as the village philosopher.

The film pits utopian feminism against masculine philosophy, embodied by Crooked Finger, who teaches Antonia's offspring the tenets of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. This negative tradition is lent respect by portraying Crooked Finger in the compassionate manner of Franz Hals.

Crooked Finger dwells in darkness. What light enters his cave of a house is brought in during the lessons he gives Antonia's line of daughters, but it is all absorbed in the massive library surrounding him. His influence is voiced by young Therese: "It's too bad that nothing exists," and countered by wise old Antonia: "Yes, isn't it, when there's so much here?" Cut to a fallow field, awaiting its turn.

The paradox of a joyful, affirmative feminism cohabiting with savage, philosophical despair is the fulcrum upon which Gorris balances the intellectual tension of her movie. Man at his best is a thinker, but his thinking only paralyzes him; at his worst, man is a rapist. In contrast, Gorris maps out the existence of woman as the world of action. Labor in the field, labor to produce children, labor in geometry—Antonia's granddaughter Therese is a mathematician—and, of course, the struggle of the painter, Antonia's daughter Danielle. The last of Antonia's line is Sarah, whose job is to understand at what point life becomes death—perhaps the greatest task of all, assisted by the narration pronouncing that the seasons are tragically indifferent to our passions or pastimes.

Structured as a flashback from the day that Antonia awakens to die, the film shows the many faces of death—Pitte's murder, Crooked Finger's suicide, a tractor accident that takes Loony Lips. Part of the rhythm of village life, Death will have its day. The fruitful Letta advocates pregnancy as a way of life, but in a "live by the sword, die by the sword" manner, her 13th child proves unlucky, leaving Letta on her deathbed, surrounded by a motley crowd. It is a scene constructed like Brueghel's exquisite grisaille panel, *The Death of the Virgin,* with its long expanse of white bed before the dying woman, and the suffering faces of the faithful crowding around in sad recognition of the final moment. Different, however, is the tone set by Letta's last words: "Shit, I don't want to stop!"

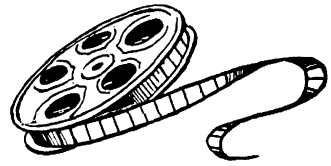
Antonia's death frames the film. Its knell is a call to us not to resist our mortality, either in life or in death. By the time Antonia dies, we have seen the impact of this hearty woman on a village she has transformed into a new world order. Her work may stretch beyond her, but she accepts life's limits and tells her great-granddaughter, "This is the only dance we dance." Antonia's omniscience in matters of life and death make her the mother-goddess, but Gorris extends Antonia's prescience to the other villagers, who "knew all, but were silent as the grave."

The power of silence was the subject of Marleen Gorris's first film, *A Question of Silence*, made ten years ago, about three women who hang tough and say nothing, after one of them is assaulted by a shopkeeper for shoplifting and all of them rise up to kill him. What did they see? What did they do? Only they know, and they're not telling.

Feminist unity in *Antonia's Line* is more diverse and light-hearted. But it is the most complete vision ever brought to the screen, and it rises out of a great visual tradition, ironically from the Catholic lowlands where the Cult of the Virgin flourished in the Middle Ages. Gorris includes a religious processional in the film, during which the villagers chant the names of the saints—only female saints—to usher in the spring. Gorris skips the woman-as-martyr prelude to being inscribed in the canon and offers Antonia as a saint for our time; she's solid, productive, and knows when her time is up.

KAREN JAEHNE

■ Karen Jaehne writes for FilmScouts.com online.



SERIOUS ABOUT CINEMA?

Free sampler catalog from Facets' astonishing collection of over 27,000 foreign, classic American, silent, documentary, experimental, music, fine arts, children's videos and laser discs. Purchase for as low as $7.99 or rent-by-mail.

1517 W. Fullerton #5103
Chicago, IL 60614
e-mail: sales@facets.org

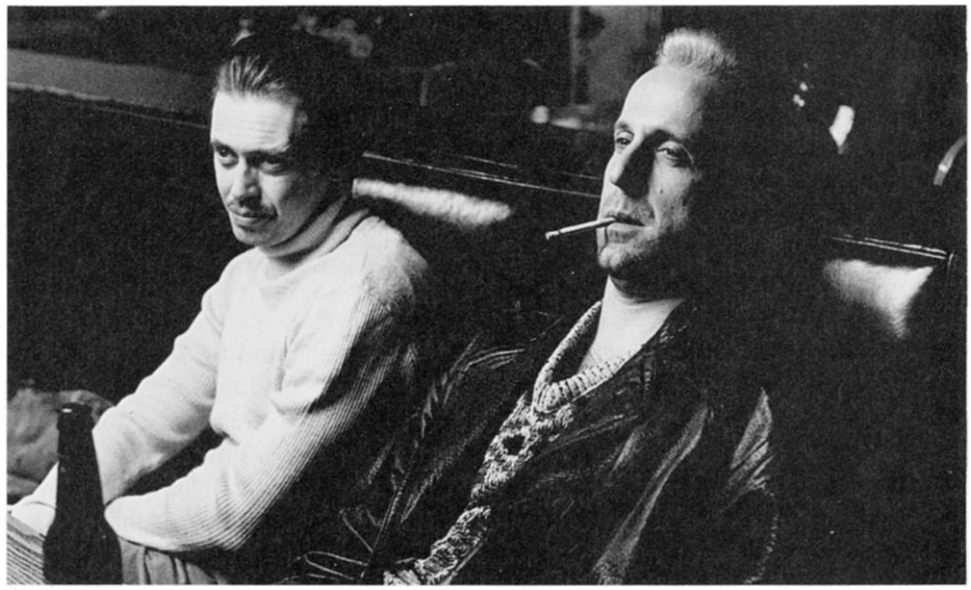
FACETS VIDEO
1-800-331-6197
Extension 5103

Fargo

Director: Joel Coen. Producer: Ethan Coen. Screenplay: Ethan & Joel Coen. Cinematographer: Roger Deakins. Music: Carter Burwell. Gramercy Pictures.

The Coen brothers have spent 12 years and six movies walking a tightrope of their own devising, flirting with the nihilism and ex-cathedra contempt for the poor materials of reality that are marks of the gifted undergraduate. What has saved them from hipsterism is a sense of irony that is not merely ironic, a consistent faith in the power of controlled craft to open up holes of chaos in content, and a study of the quirk so monastic and intent it yields ambiguities not retrievable by looser methods.

What also saves them is an artistic personality which, in opposition to many of their vaunted peers in the film school generation, is less a commercial trademark, a promise of the familiar, than an organizing impulse in the movies themselves. They are darker-souled than Tarantino and also less obsessed with fun at any cost, and though they are temperamentally incapable of aggressively confronting an audience as Spike Lee does, they are still too involved in the oddities of their imagination to affect the Jarmusch shrug. Nor can they be accurately described as pastiche artists, as mavens of the literary swipe and the cinematic in-joke. Certainly the comic contemplation of genre tropes is a player in their game, but they have used the in-joke (or, in polite society, intertextuality) not as a self-justifying end but as a springboard to touch depths mostly unplumbed by the purveyors of either pulp fiction or *Pulp Fiction*. Whether *Miller's Crossing* takes off from Dashiell Hammett or *Blood Simple* from James M. Cain is ultimately less important than that the Coens have twisted the various idioms into shapes peculiar to themselves, and that despite their stylistic change-ups they have, like most great film artists, been making essentially the same movie over and over again, playing variations on a theme. That their styles do not bespeak "obsessiveness" does not mean an obsession is not being worked out.



Thugs: Steve Buscemi (left) and Peter Stormare

This said, the pursuit of personal themes does not ensure a straight shot to enlightenment; it may as easily as any other path yield a blind alley. *Fargo* sees the Coens plummeting unceremoniously from their tightrope, not taking a fall so much as a willed descent. Fundamentally, the film cannot be called a failure, since it is clearly the work it was meant to be, and it is if nothing else of a conceptual piece with everything they have ever done. But its very success on its own terms is disturbing because *Fargo*, in addition to being

a personal work, is also a fatuous piece of nonsense, a tall cool drink of witless condescension. Coming from the Coens, it is a betrayal—of themselves, of their audience, of a human milieu.

Like each of their five previous features, *Fargo* is about the quotidian horrors visited upon those who would commit the grave error of living out not the lives they have been given but the lives they envision in their own master narratives. Minneapolis car salesman Jerry Lundegaard (William H. Macy) hires two men (the rat-like Steve Buscemi and the hulking ice-monster Peter Stormare) to kidnap his wife, his hope being to extort money from his parsimonious father-in-law. Grievous violence and a strangely homiletic, Velveeta-textured variety of chaos ensue, until order pervades in the pendulous form of the seven-months-pregnant Marge Gunderson (Frances McDormand). Marge is sheriff of the little northern Minnesota town that hosted a pair of homicides related to the kidnapping; despite her chirruping mouth and eyes perpetually peeled in an avid gape, she is a self-effacing pro who will not only solve the case but face down evil and live to wonder at the saddening, mystifying inhumanity of man.

Buscemi and "date"
Michelle Hutchinson

Though an opening title suggests a factual basis for the story, it hews so closely to the Coen line that its purported documentary truth becomes irrelevant after the first ten minutes. Jerry, the common-man hero of *Fargo*, is kin to the other Coen figures who did their best to hold reality hostage so that they might live a while in the cozier realm of fantasy. The master narrative is his, but—like the other characters—Jerry finds his grand designs aborted by the incompetence, conflicting motives, or undifferentiated hostility of those who will not play their parts. He and his plot hearken back to the confused scenarios of infidelity in *Blood Simple*, the bourgeois aspirations of the *Raising Arizona* hero, the machinations of an Irish mob mastermind in *Miller's Crossing*, and *Barton Fink*'s misreading of a crypto-Nazi serial killer as that grand abstraction of 30s intellectuals—the common man.

But nothing worth lingering on is ever so schematic. The mickey in such a reading of the Coens' work is that the end point of a given fantasy is not predetermined. In *Fargo*, it goes disastrously wrong; in *The Hudsucker Proxy*, it executes itself with the precision of a timepiece. In *Miller's Crossing,* it goes both right and wrong, with the Irishman scripting things perfectly but for one detail: having written himself out of the order he has obtained, he ensures his own desolation, his own surcease as the hero of the fantasy. If the dream of self-determination (and consequent control of the immediate environment) is the theme, then these are the variations, and they signal the currents of possibility, disorder, and chance that percolate below the self-possessed surfaces of what is otherwise a tightly dammed style.

Fargo, though bound to the Coens' better work by the connective tissue of thematics and a deliberate visual aesthetic, constitutes a rupture in every other way, trading dark humor for dim slapstick, a piquantly distanced observational mode for a feckless pose of

sham objectivity. The film's sole claim to narrative novelty is, of course, the insertion as crimestopper and moral orderly of a pregnant woman whose singular ungainliness stems less from her physical condition than her insistence on a fanatically hearty demeanor. She is that rarest of birds in the Coen aviary, a true innocent.

The problem is that in *Fargo* the Coens do not give true innocence its dramatic or psychological credit, as they do with the corruption and inner rot that sire Jerry's scheme and predestine its abysmal end. Marge's naïveté does not come off as something which in its way is as organic and inviolable, and thus as much an expression of essential character, as the pure evil which Stormare represents and which is far easier for an artist to sell to an audience. The Coens play the character in two irreconcilable ways, first tipping their hand by scoring Marge's clever crime-scene conjectures for laughs even though they are meant to suggest a shrewdness which resides in her like the meat in a bland walnut. As written and performed, Marge is so vapid that her astute ratiocinations seem more a function of plot exigencies than any definition of persona. While promoting her homespun acumen, the Coens inflate her horsy jollity—neglecting any corners of doubt or disturbance that might lie between—and the split leaves the character not just gutted of particular qualities but grandiosely unreal, an elaborately embellished kitsch artifact. When faced with the full measure of the atrocious crimes that have been committed—that point in the story which requires her, finally, to say what she is about—she has this to say: "I don't understand it." That no ambivalence soils the virgin territory of her mind seals her fate as a character, and shows the Coens resorting to the oldest, easiest kind of positivist aphorism: ignorance is not only bliss, but grace.

Marge represents too well the north-country rabble that inhabits this snowy landscape, most of them undiscerning pods whose ordinary human specificity is buried under vacuous grins, cowtown bonhomie, and about 50 too many distended Scandinavian "yahhh"'s. The "yahhh" is ubiquitous, for the screenplay sings it like a mantra; Whitman's yawp is here transmuted to a somewhat less stirring assertion of self. The fact that even the most addled Minnesotans do not sound like this is of course not to the point; that this vocal leitmotif diminishes the characters instead of particularizing them is. (The faux-literate argot of *Raising Arizona* had the opposite effect, since it signified both the absence and the unreality of Hi McDonough's grand dreams without reducing him to foólishness; in the film's cartoon context, such language was a key to character as much as comedy.) The "yahhh," in fact, is what topples the Coens from their tightrope—that which spans the gulf between condescending to one's characters and magnifying one's ambivalence toward them for a larger and fuller effect.

Watching TV: Frances McDormand and John Carroll Lynch

The Coens have often been accused of condescending, but close viewing always deflected the charge. In the past they have had the nerve to burrow past condescension to discover a more complex, less

comfortable empathy with their characters than fiction usually grants in our benighted time. Barton Fink, for all his blather and oblivion, was also allowed the grace of sitting on a beach, quietly contemplating his own disintegration as a poster-art beauty sat beyond his reach and a clumsy gull speared its quarry in the Pacific. There are few moments in movies that are more dispassionate, and fewer that effect such a galling, inarticulate connection to one's own cosmic loneliness.

That spin which the Coens give to our expectation of and need for empathy amounts to an existential reversal, given that empathy as a literary idea is commonly understood to be a unifying agent. "Who is that man?" becomes "I am that man." At their most original, the Coens have exercised the darker, more difficult impulse to unite characters and audience not in the warmth of a common affirmation, but in the chill of a common alienation. It's an empathy that says not "I recognize that man's situation and now don't feel so lonely," but "I recognize that man's situation and now I'm lonelier than before." So the Coens do, in some measure, recoil from Barton Fink, just as Frank Norris (and von Stroheim) recoiled from McTeague, or as any author recoils from a character who needs to learn something the author feels he already knows. But having recoiled, the Coens do not sidle back into the safety of superiority. Instead they are thrown back on the fact of despair, and with their roving camera suddenly paralyzed, they can do nothing but watch the waves.

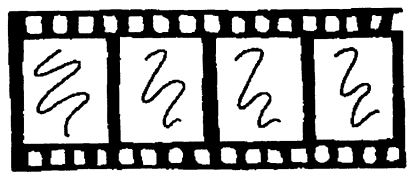
Fargo does nothing more striking than to unite its characters in the torpor of a common idiocy, and this goes past the mere depiction of ordinary people as obtuse bunglers in the face of fleshly realities. This theme goes back a long way, and certainly in the Coen universe nearly everyone is blood simple under the facade of hauteur and self-control, save for those monstrous wild cards (M. Emmett Walsh in *Blood Simple*, John Goodman in *Fink*, Stormare in *Fargo*) who are just plain simple, the hot point of their humanity having been frozen by some ambiguous pathology. The film extends no empathy, easy or hard, to its belittled figures, and to the extent that it tries to elicit ours (Marge), it is repelled by gross caricature. (The kidnapped wife is a shrieking windup toy, and even the residual pity one feels for the hapless Lundegaard is due more to William H. Macy's rubber mask of jovial desperation than to any overarching fear for his fate created by the Coens.) The film's failure is that it mistakes the easy return of ethnic humor for the deeper response engendered by characters who are defined in emotionally or psychologically significant ways, and that it unproblematically offers its heroine's home-and-hearth complacency—her shallows, not her depths—as proof of human substance. This is condescension if anything is.

All auteurs content themselves on occasion with skating along the thin surface of their fixations rather than engaging deeply with them and thus risking incoherence, self-indulgence, failure. For every *Persona* there is an *Hour of the Wolf*, for every *Touch of Evil* a *Mr. Arkadin*. The Coens are not yet in this company, but they are continuing to stake a piece of cinematic ground which other film-makers will find hard to share, and what they do right in *Fargo* is very right—namely, dank but pungent scenes of unexcited violence which bring in a cold air of hopelessness and are the film's only exchange with anything troubling.

But otherwise *Fargo* is troubling only in unintended ways. The ending, which finds Marge and phlegmatic hubby snugly abed with talk of postage stamps, is another of the Coens' faintly absurdist enigmas, this time lacking the potent ingredients that allowed the others to tantalize. It is in fact an upbeat variant on the ending of *Barton Fink*. Both narratives tramp through thickets of essentially unmotivated destruction to find chaos bestilled for a moment. In *Fink* the final absurdism found itself in a wordless quiet which accompanied the detritus of human violence. Here it lies in the embrace of banality as an eternal verity, the value for which Middle Americans deserve the approbation of their cultural betters: postage stamps and a baby on the way. Barton watches the ocean; Mr. and Mrs. Marge watch TV.

DEVIN MCKINNEY

■ Devin McKinney, a past contributor to *Film Quarterly*, was raised in Iowa and lives in New York City.



Annual Film Quarterly Book Roundup, Part II

Animating Culture

Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era

By Eric Smoodin. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993. $40.00 cloth; $15.95 paper.

Disney Discourse

Producing the Magic Kingdom

Edited by Eric Smoodin. New York: Routledge, 1994. $62.95 cloth; $16.95 paper.

Eric Smoodin's *Animating Culture: Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era*, and his anthology, *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*, contain informative and interesting essays spanning a wide range of topics—from Disney's wartime films to Tokyo Disneyland to the business dealings and Disney family feuds behind them. Both books acknowledge the complexity of the topic undertaken, producing an in-depth look at personal, historical, political, and cultural contexts of the company and its creations. They make fine additions to the realm of discourse surrounding the Disney empire.

Using a variety of sources including copyright records, F.B.I. and other government files, advertisements, magazines, memos, and other correspondence, *Animating Culture* attempts to tie animation, mostly of the 1930s and 1940s, to the commercial and political contexts surrounding its production. The book is not quite as broad as the title implies; it concentrates mainly on wartime production and Disney animation, particularly in the last half of the book, which provides an interesting view of Disney as seen by the press and government. It is, however, in these two areas where the book is at its best.

The first chapter, "Studio Strategies: Sexuality, the Law, and Corporate Competition," looks at censorship, the Production Code, and the written descriptions that represented the films for copyright purposes. The copyright descriptions turn out to be interesting examples of studio strategies for avoiding censorship conflicts, and Smoodin includes social and cultural contexts behind these issues as well as product differentiation between studios, and representations of race, gender, and class in the cartoons. He also includes a number of interesting anecdotes (one describing how a Tex Avery cartoon, cut by censors for domestic audiences, was requested uncut for military use overseas).

The context surrounding the production of the films is good, but occasionally takes the place of a discussion

of the actual production methods leading to product differentiation. "Disney Domination" of the cartoon market is discussed, but no mention is made of the comparative quality of Disney cartoons versus others, nor of Disney's innovations and experiments (such as sound, color, multiplane, character development, and effects animation) which helped to differentiate Disney's films and put them ahead of the competition. Likewise, the discussion of censorship concentrates on sex, leaving out the subject of violence, despite the frequency of cartoon violence and its centrality to many of the narratives.

The second chapter, "Reading the Film Bill: Features, Cartoons, and the First-Run Theater," examines how cartoons might have been read alongside the newsreels, short subjects, live acts, and features that accompanied them in film bills. Smoodin describes how studios could inscribe themselves into their bills, how they were pitched to various classes, and gives counterexamples of diverse bills and their possible commercial and ideological functions. Unfortunately, there are no studio memos or solid evidence as to how the bills were constructed, only the combinations of films in the bills themselves—enough proof for some readers, but perhaps not entirely convincing for others. Because of the lack of research materials, a number of assumptions are made throughout, and often acknowledged as well. Examples do provide support, and the chapter is at its best in describing the gradual shift to the wartime bills supporting the war effort.

The next chapter, "The Disappearance of Dissent: Government Propaganda and the Military Film Bill," looks at how the wartime bill was used to create "ideological wholeness" in its audience, and how propaganda became the basis for several film series. Smoodin concentrates on Warner Bros.' "Private Snafu" series, made for Frank Capra's *Army-Navy Screen Magazine*, and shows how Snafu's mistakes were a cautionary tale for the recruits he entertained. The creation of consensus through the use of films and cartoons is well demonstrated, although discussion is mainly limited to the "Snafu" series. Though it would have been interesting, and probably revealing, if Smoodin had included interviews with former GIs recalling their experiences of watching the cartoons, the chapter still stands as a good introduction to the kinds of films shown to the troops during the war.

The next two chapters, "The Popular Press Views Cartoons: Shaping Public Opinion While Creating Walt Disney" and "Disney Diplomacy: The Links between Culture, Commerce, and Government Policy," narrow the focus to the Disney Company during the war and immediately afterward, and its relationship with the popular press and the government. Smoodin's research of the 1940s is in-depth; he uses a number of government memos, F.B.I. files, letters (many reproduced as photographs), and a wide variety of magazines to trace changes in the popular press's representation of Disney. The period of the 1940s is well researched, although little attention is paid to aesthetic and commercial precedents—set in the silent era—and their effects.

The latter half of chapter 4, which looks at the press's representations of the 1941 labor strike at the Disney Company, is, along with chapter 5, one of the best and most revealing. Smoodin looks at *Commonweal, Business Week, The Saturday Review, Time, Atlantic Monthly*, and *Popular Science*, contrasting their difference representations of Disney and the strike, and their attitudes toward labor. The section provides an interesting picture both of Disney as a corporate entity and of the magazines chronicling the strike, and acts as a good segue into the final chapter.

"Disney Diplomacy" examines Disney's relationship with the U.S. government, using files from the State Department, Treasury Department, and the F.B.I., as well as letters from film viewers to the government. Interesting accounts are given of how the government used Disney in their plans to compete with German propaganda films in South America while at the same time developing film markets there. Smoodin details some of the conflicts between ethnic authenticity, propaganda concerns, and animation conventions that went into the making and exporting of films such as the "El Gaucho Goofy" section of *Saludos Amigos*. There is also a detailed section on the files the F.B.I. kept on Walt Disney, and the ups and downs in the strange relationship between them.

Whereas *Animating Culture* does not focus wholly on Disney, *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* concentrates on Disney alone, presenting a variety of topics and views through different periods of history. The anthology is divided into four sections; the first, "A Disney Archaeology," is composed of essays on Disney from 1940, 1943, and 1963. These tend to be popular and positive in tone, and depict the goings-on of the Disney studio before Walt died. They are included as a representative example of earlier writings and serve as an introduction to the discourse surrounding Disney.

Contemporary essays fill the rest of the book. The second section, "National Production," begins with three excellent essays on Disney's business history. One of the anthology's best essays, Douglas Gomery's "Disney's Business History: A Reinterpretation," is thoroughly researched and shows, in detail, the financial struggles of the studio; the innovative strategies that finally resulted in success; its plunge after the deaths of Walt and his brother Roy; and its eventual return to success in the late

1980s. "Disney After Disney: Family Business and the Business of Family," by Jon Lewis, begins with the business practices and greed of the Eisner/Wells/Katzenberg management, but also recounts the family feud between Walt and his brother Roy which led to a decades-long corporate battle between their successors.

The section's third essay, "Painting a Plausible World: Disney's Color Prototypes" by Richard Neupert, is an inside look at how Disney's color cartoons became the prototype films that helped Technicolor achieve its dominant position as a color process, and how the cartoons shaped and influenced the use of color as it was emerging. Neupert's historical data is combined with economic and technical data, resulting in a well-rounded picture of the symbiosis between Disney and Technicolor in the development of the use of color film.

The last essay of the section, Alexander Wilson's "The Betrayal of the Future: Walt Disney's EPCOT Center," is largely a recounting of a visit to EPCOT, with descriptions of the various buildings and rides, and critiques of them: the misrepresentations of history, the influences of the industrial sponsors, the stereotypes and simplifications of the World Showcase, and so on. Although one might well consider the critiques to be valid, the sneering tone of the essay quickly becomes tiresome; it's one thing to find EPCOT historically misleading or banal, but at times Wilson's tone here sounds like a cynical teenager dragged to EPCOT by his parents.

The third section of the book, "The Global Reach," begins with two articles looking at Disney's wartime films of Latin America. "Surprise Package: Looking Southward with Disney," by Julianne Burton-Carvajal, examines the tensions between ethnic and cultural authenticity and animation style and conventions in *The Three Caballeros*, offering "Ten Perverse Propositions on Desire in Disney" at the end. While it would have been interesting to learn how the film was received in Latin America, or to what extent it was even seen there, the essay is particularly good at showing the "packaging" of Latin America by the U.S. in the film. The second essay, José Piedra's "Paso Donald's Gender Ducking," looks at the Disney films of Latin America as American ideology asserting itself over its southern neighbors, connecting the political issues involved to libidinal ones in a string of extended analogies. While the political and historical aspects of the essay are interesting, the libidinal analogies occasionally seem rather stretched or unconvincing, the differences and discrepancies often left unacknowledged. In some ways, Piedra's picture of Latin America as a powerless victim unable to stop the flow of foreign influence seems a little one-sided; little is said about Latin America's own cooperation in the process.

The section's third essay, Lisa Cartwright and Brian Goldfarb's "Cultural Contagion: On Disney's Health Education Films for Latin America," looks at the 15 health-care films produced during the war. They show how the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs used the Disney health films in an attempt to make Latin America safe for U.S. interests and business, countering the German-owned communication systems. The best essay of this section, Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto's "Images of Empire: Tokyo Disneyland and Japanese Cultural Imperialism," makes the interesting argument that instead of being a sign of American cultural imperialism, "Tokyo Disneyland is in fact one of the most powerful manifestations of contemporary Japanese nationalism," and that "Disneyland is arguably the most Japanese institution in the United States." The essay also provides an interesting analysis of how Disneyland functions, and a discussion of the differences between Tokyo Disneyland and the Disneyland in Anaheim, as well as the similarities between Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo itself.

The last section of the book, "Reception," looks at some of Disney's marketing strategies and their historical context. The first essay, Richard de Cordova's "The Mickey in Macy's Window: Childhood, Consumerism, and Disney Animation," examines the merchandising of Mickey Mouse to children in the 1930s, and also looks at parallels between the cinema industry and the toy industry, and their reforms during the 1920s and 30s. De Cordova shows how the Disney toys supported the films and helped produce an audience, and how they connected childhood with consumerism. Moya Luckett's "*Fantasia*: Cultural Constructions of Disney's 'Masterpiece,'" compares the marketing, publicity, and reception of *Fantasia* during its release in 1940 and rereleases in 1954 and 1991, and the different contexts of new technologies in which it appeared. Precedents set by the "Silly Symphony" cartoons are mentioned, though not, unfortunately, discussed in depth.

Overall, *Disney Discourse* is an interesting collection and sampling of writings on Disney, covering a variety of topics and angles, which acknowledges the complexity of a subject as vast as Disney, a company whose contradictions are felt by many to be emblematic of American entertainment in general.

MARK J.P. WOLF

■ Mark J. P. Wolf teaches at Concordia University in Wisconsin.

Antonioni

The Poet of Images

By William Arrowsmith. Edited with an introduction by Ted Perry. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. $25.00.

William Arrowsmith was a distinguished classicist known for his translations and his essays on Greek drama and T.S. Eliot. When he died in 1992, he left behind an unfinished manuscript on Michelangelo Antonioni. Before his passing, Arrowsmith asked his colleague Ted Perry, a noted scholar of Italian film, to prepare his Antonioni book for publication, in the event of his death. Perry, in what is surely a labor of love and a testimony to friendship, obliged; *Antonioni: The Poet of Images* is the result. The book consists of eight essays on films ranging from *Il Grido* (1956) to *The Passenger* (1975). Only two of the essays had been extensively rewritten for publication by Arrowsmith—those on *Red Desert* and *The Passenger*; the remaining essays were in early draft versions. Perry speculates that these latter essays were most likely Arrowsmith's retyped lecture notes for a series he had done at the Museum of Modern Art in 1977. Perry writes that he has "done a fair amount of editing on the unpublished essays . . . resist[ing] as much as possible the temptation to rewrite extensively."

In Perry's passionate introduction to the book, he talks about Arrowsmith's identification with Antonioni. Perry writes, "Why else would a critic labor so enthusiastically if not because he saw the text of his own life in the text of the artist?" One can think of many credible responses to this question, but it locates a premise that underwrites Arrowsmith's perspective on the film-maker: there is no question that Antonioni's personal vision of the world shapes his art, and that this vision has the capacity to inform the spectator about the world and about life in a profound way. Perry articulates these propositions succinctly when he says, "What we require from the film artist is nothing less than the impress of the self, a raging subjectivity presenting its revelatory vision not as lesson to be learned but as experience to be apprehended." The film-maker and the critic work in collaboration; criticism becomes a creative and vital reply to art. Perry, on Arrowsmith's behalf, expresses his colleague's feelings about the state of Antonioni criticism:

> Arrowsmith . . . didn't suffer fools—not those of popular film criticism who he believed often unfairly dismissed and stupidly misunderstood Antonioni's work, and not those of academic film criticism who he felt were so caught up in intellectual fads that they no longer gave a hoot about great texts, wouldn't know a great text if they stepped on one, or if by some accident they did recognize a great text, wouldn't have the courage to say so.

Film scholars unsympathetic to auteurism, to the notion that there are great artists, to the centrality of the self in art and criticism, or to the idea that art can be consequential to human experience, will probably not find much of value in this book. The rest of us will.

Arrowsmith's text outlines Antonioni's concerns, which center around the condition of humanity in the modern world, e.g., the loss of connectedness to the self and nature, the human hunger for meaning and transcendence, the "sense of tragic loneliness . . . felt by the individual who refuses to surrender his fragile, emerging 'self' to the warm oblivion of Eros or to the embrace of the collective 'One.'" Arrowsmith assays the crisis of individuality that results in what Antonioni calls "Sick Eros," where love and sexuality must fulfill the gap left in social structures by the decay and disappearance of family, church, and country. Since it is impossible for Eros to adequately sustain all of these functions, it becomes deformed, and emerges as a quest for intimacy through compulsive sexual liaisons, and as a desire for a loss of consciousness through sex, drugs, alcohol, and other forms of narcosis. Thought and feeling are hopelessly divided in this fragmented and distorted "death in life" that afflicts so many of Antonioni's characters.

Arrowsmith's is a writerly text; he sensuously renders—with the concentrated and powerful images of a poet—the existents of Antonioni's universe, as in this passage on *Eclipse*:

> the . . . idea of imprisoned sentiments, expressed as claustrophobia—in dead, stale air, the stifling enclosure of a musty, stuffy room; as in Riccardo's apartment, with its fan and trays of stubbed cigarettes; or Vittoria's sudden recoil before the mirror as she senses something like death in the catatonic features and posture of Riccardo; then the longing to escape as she peers through the curtains at the dawn world outside, only to find herself imprisoned by the window glass; or the musty darkness in the apartment of Piero's parents, with the silent square and church below at the dead of siesta—the image of a dead or stricken world.

Each essay is beautifully detailed, and shows an easy familiarity with the world in which Antonioni's figures move. Arrowsmith is knowledgeable about the Italian

landscape and architecture with which Antonioni is so absorbed; he weaves a densely allusive tapestry of cultural motifs, particularly where Antonioni is influenced by both ancient and modern Italian poetry. (For a more substantive political and historical contextualization of Antonioni's films, one might turn to P. Adams Sitney's recently published *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema.*) Arrowsmith is less concerned with establishing Antonioni's connection to his own contemporaries than with situating him vis-à-vis other " . . . modern masters: Valéry and Eliot in poetry, Joyce in the novel, Beckett in the theater, Picasso in painting."

Arrowsmith's list of "modern masters" is interesting for what it excludes. In this, he betrays a kind of mild snobbery toward film that one secretly suspects of literary scholars. On one side Arrowsmith is insistent that Antonioni " . . . refuses to accept the prevalent notion that a film, despite the incredible complexity of which it is theoretically capable, is . . . doomed to one or at most two viewings. Why, after all, should the director demand less of himself and his audiences than any painter or poet?" True. Yet Arrowsmith pointedly limits his commentary to cultural forms *other than cinema* in his quest to legitimize Antonioni's work. He briefly mentions Kurosawa, Bergman, and Fellini, but acknowledges few affinities between Antonioni and his precursors, contemporaries, or progeny in film. The author's lack of commitment to film becomes something of an obstacle when he is describing scenes of formal virtuosity, one of the *données* of Antonioni's style. Arrowsmith cites a passage from *Red Desert*—the love-making scene between Corrado and Giuliana—and makes a claim for Antonioni's "meticulous craftsmanship." But he overlooks the radical stylistic innovations—the syndecdochic use of the body, the disjunctive editing patterns, the nonnaturalistic manipulation of sound—that make this scene truly astonishing. On the other hand, Arrowsmith brings a level of transcultural insight to the film-maker's work that one would be hard pressed to find in most books about film.

The genesis of this book, and Ted Perry's avowed reluctance to tamper with Arrowsmith's writing, is not without consequences. As Antonioni is obsessed with certain themes and formal tropes, Arrowsmith seems mesmerized by particular images from these films, and tends to repeat an image, using the same descriptive phrases, in each essay. In a variation of the same syndrome, Arrowsmith overuses particular words—"environing" and "intrication" spring to mind. It is a reasonable decision to respect a writer's stylistic quirks when editing a work posthumously. However, reading the two essays that Arrowsmith had a chance to rework, one is led to believe—through his careful use of language—that he would have corrected these repetitions in his final draft. Nonetheless, Ted Perry must be congratulated for undertaking this important task. Arrowsmith has written a wise, understanding, and often profound meditation on one of the true originals of contemporary cinema.

CAROLE ZUCKER

■ Carole Zucker teaches at Concordia University, Montreal. [Her book, *Figures of Light*, is reviewed on p. 49. Ed.]

Auteur/Provocateur

The Films of Denys Arcand

Edited by André Loiselle and Brian McIlroy. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995. $59.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Auteur/Provocateur: The Films of Denys Arcand examines the life and works of the Canadian director whose films have had only marginal impact in the United States. My only objection to the volume is that Arcand and his colleagues spend far more time "U.S. bashing" than discussing Arcand's films themselves; this tactic becomes a resounding refrain for much of the volume, and is imprecise and tiresome after a while. The essayists in this volume seem to miss the point that the Hollywood big-budget film has marginalized all other forms of worldwide cinematic discourse, without singling out any one country or culture, in the interest of worldwide imperialist/colonialist control over image creation/reproduction and dissemination, and the concomitant control over world box-office returns. Hollywood doesn't care specifically about decimating any one particular societal structure; and to take it personally, is, to me, a mistake. Hollywood wants to control the worldwide box office by giving the public the lowest-common-denominator product it sadly seems to want. By following this line of least resistance, Hollywood wins; any sort of thoughtful, questioning cinema (such as Arcand's) is bound to come in second.

That said, Loiselle and McIlroy have compiled a wide-ranging series of essays in the volume, covering nearly all aspects of the production, distribution, exhibition, and reception of Arcand's work. For those of us in the United States, it might be best to skip directly to Peter Wilkins' essay "No Big Picture: Arcand and his U.S. Critics" to discover why Arcand's films are not better known in the States. The essay opens with the assertion

landscape and architecture with which Antonioni is so absorbed; he weaves a densely allusive tapestry of cultural motifs, particularly where Antonioni is influenced by both ancient and modern Italian poetry. (For a more substantive political and historical contextualization of Antonioni's films, one might turn to P. Adams Sitney's recently published *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema.*) Arrowsmith is less concerned with establishing Antonioni's connection to his own contemporaries than with situating him vis-à-vis other " . . . modern masters: Valéry and Eliot in poetry, Joyce in the novel, Beckett in the theater, Picasso in painting."

Arrowsmith's list of "modern masters" is interesting for what it excludes. In this, he betrays a kind of mild snobbery toward film that one secretly suspects of literary scholars. On one side Arrowsmith is insistent that Antonioni " . . . refuses to accept the prevalent notion that a film, despite the incredible complexity of which it is theoretically capable, is . . . doomed to one or at most two viewings. Why, after all, should the director demand less of himself and his audiences than any painter or poet?" True. Yet Arrowsmith pointedly limits his commentary to cultural forms *other than cinema* in his quest to legitimize Antonioni's work. He briefly mentions Kurosawa, Bergman, and Fellini, but acknowledges few affinities between Antonioni and his precursors, contemporaries, or progeny in film. The author's lack of commitment to film becomes something of an obstacle when he is describing scenes of formal virtuosity, one of the *données* of Antonioni's style. Arrowsmith cites a passage from *Red Desert*—the love-making scene between Corrado and Giuliana—and makes a claim for Antonioni's "meticulous craftsmanship." But he overlooks the radical stylistic innovations—the syndecdochic use of the body, the disjunctive editing patterns, the nonnaturalistic manipulation of sound—that make this scene truly astonishing. On the other hand, Arrowsmith brings a level of transcultural insight to the film-maker's work that one would be hard pressed to find in most books about film.

The genesis of this book, and Ted Perry's avowed reluctance to tamper with Arrowsmith's writing, is not without consequences. As Antonioni is obsessed with certain themes and formal tropes, Arrowsmith seems mesmerized by particular images from these films, and tends to repeat an image, using the same descriptive phrases, in each essay. In a variation of the same syndrome, Arrowsmith overuses particular words—"environing" and "intrication" spring to mind. It is a reasonable decision to respect a writer's stylistic quirks when editing a work posthumously. However, reading the two essays that Arrowsmith had a chance to rework, one is led to believe—through his careful use of language—that he would have corrected these repetitions in his final draft. Nonetheless, Ted Perry must be congratulated for undertaking this important task. Arrowsmith has written a wise, understanding, and often profound meditation on one of the true originals of contemporary cinema.

CAROLE ZUCKER

■ Carole Zucker teaches at Concordia University, Montreal. [Her book, *Figures of Light*, is reviewed on p. 49. Ed.]

Auteur/Provocateur

The Films of Denys Arcand

Edited by André Loiselle and Brian McIlroy. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995. $59.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Auteur/Provocateur: The Films of Denys Arcand examines the life and works of the Canadian director whose films have had only marginal impact in the United States. My only objection to the volume is that Arcand and his colleagues spend far more time "U.S. bashing" than discussing Arcand's films themselves; this tactic becomes a resounding refrain for much of the volume, and is imprecise and tiresome after a while. The essayists in this volume seem to miss the point that the Hollywood big-budget film has marginalized all other forms of worldwide cinematic discourse, without singling out any one country or culture, in the interest of worldwide imperialist/colonialist control over image creation/reproduction and dissemination, and the concomitant control over world box-office returns. Hollywood doesn't care specifically about decimating any one particular societal structure; and to take it personally, is, to me, a mistake. Hollywood wants to control the worldwide box office by giving the public the lowest-common-denominator product it sadly seems to want. By following this line of least resistance, Hollywood wins; any sort of thoughtful, questioning cinema (such as Arcand's) is bound to come in second.

That said, Loiselle and McIlroy have compiled a wide-ranging series of essays in the volume, covering nearly all aspects of the production, distribution, exhibition, and reception of Arcand's work. For those of us in the United States, it might be best to skip directly to Peter Wilkins' essay "No Big Picture: Arcand and his U.S. Critics" to discover why Arcand's films are not better known in the States. The essay opens with the assertion

that "the Americans have had more to do with the slow development of Canadian cinema than any other force" (113), but Wilkins drops this framing assertion to discuss the American critical reception of Arcand's films as a unique corpus of work. Citing Stanley Kauffmann's generally favorable review in *The New Republic*, Wilkins still finds fault with Kauffmann's objection that Arcand's *The Decline of the American Empire* ought be called "*The Decline of the North American Empire*, since it is set in Canada; better, it ought to borrow [the title of Oswald] Spengler's *Decline of the West*" (117). Wilkins disagrees with this point, finding that "Kauffmann's confusion over the title of *The Decline* is symptomatic of the fact that Americans do not see themselves as having Imperial control over Canada" (117). This single sentence sums up my objections to the volume. Wilkins is obviously convinced that this is the central issue in any appreciation of Arcand's films; yet I'm not sure that even Arcand shares Wilkins' views.

Indeed, in a lengthy interview entitled "I Only Know Where I Come From, Not Where I Am Going" conducted by André Loiselle, Arcand states flatly that *The Decline*

> is first and foremost a film about me. On the women in my life. It is obviously transposed, I am not writing my memoirs, yet. But my own life is at the centre of this film. . . . Political ideology doesn't interest me at all anymore. Many of the collective movements in which I once took part, directly or indirectly, seem to lead to a dead end (153).

Arcand's films deal with the personal over the political, and the lack of mass critical reception in the United States (actually, he has done very well on the art house circuit) is a function of the deeply personal nature of his work. Arcand's films sketch a world that is resolutely his own, yet resolutely wedded to the culture of Canada. From his early short, *Champlain* (1964), for the National Film Board of Canada, to *Jesus of Montreal* (1989) and his most recent film, *Love and Human Remains* (1993), Arcand seems most interested in exploring the territory of the human heart rather than dealing with issues on a larger scale. Yet this larger view of persons and things is embraced in all his films through the medium of human frailty and interaction, as the characters in his films keep screwing up in their possibly hopeless quest for a better understanding of their humanity, and the tasks that they feel compelled to complete within the limited time span of human existence. Above all else, Arcand seems most compelled by issues of faith and perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Loiselle and McIlroy's book emerges finally as a solid and well-researched consideration of Arcand's films, covering Arcand's work as a documentarist (in an essay by Réal La Rochelle), his early fiction films (an excellent essay by Gene Walz), the question of "gender relations" in *Decline* (Denise Perusse), and a superb essay by Bart Testa on *Jesus of Montreal*, along with a number of additional critical essays. My favorite section, however, is Loiselle's long interview with Arcand himself, in which the film-maker seems pragmatic, self-effacing, and winningly modest about his career. Capped by Brian McIlroy's painstakingly detailed filmography of Arcand's work, *Auteur/Provocateur* is an essential volume in understanding Arcand's films.

WHEELER WINSTON DIXON

■ Wheeler Winston Dixon is Chairperson of the Film Studies Program, University of Nebraska, Lincoln. His most recent book is *It Looks at You: The Returned Gaze of Cinema*.

Censorship and the Permissive Society

British Cinema and Theatre 1955–1965

By Anthony Aldgate. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. $45.00.

When I grew up in London in the 50s I participated, like many others, in a peculiarly British rite of cinematic childhood. I stood outside the cinema, and, if the film was marked "A" (Adult Only), would address any passing adult with the words "Please sir, can you take me in?" If the film was an "H" or horror film, like *Frankenstein*, I would put aside my school cap, borrow my elder brother's hat and raincoat, and try to appear at least 16 years old. If the film was a "U" picture sanctioned for universal or general audiences, like *Bambi*, I had no problem.

This rating system had been around for years before I came on the scene. It was, in fact, the brainchild of the British Board of Film Censors, an independent body set up in 1912. The task of the Board, or B.B.F.C., was to decide which films were fit for British eyes, and under what conditions. Rarely did the Board ban a film. Most of its work was concerned with suggesting modifications and cuts to producers, so that the integrity and purity of the viewers' souls could be preserved.

that "the Americans have had more to do with the slow development of Canadian cinema than any other force" (113), but Wilkins drops this framing assertion to discuss the American critical reception of Arcand's films as a unique corpus of work. Citing Stanley Kauffmann's generally favorable review in *The New Republic*, Wilkins still finds fault with Kauffmann's objection that Arcand's *The Decline of the American Empire* ought be called "*The Decline of the North American Empire*, since it is set in Canada; better, it ought to borrow [the title of Oswald] Spengler's *Decline of the West*" (117). Wilkins disagrees with this point, finding that "Kauffmann's confusion over the title of *The Decline* is symptomatic of the fact that Americans do not see themselves as having Imperial control over Canada" (117). This single sentence sums up my objections to the volume. Wilkins is obviously convinced that this is the central issue in any appreciation of Arcand's films; yet I'm not sure that even Arcand shares Wilkins' views.

Indeed, in a lengthy interview entitled "I Only Know Where I Come From, Not Where I Am Going" conducted by André Loiselle, Arcand states flatly that *The Decline*

> is first and foremost a film about me. On the women in my life. It is obviously transposed, I am not writing my memoirs, yet. But my own life is at the centre of this film. . . . Political ideology doesn't interest me at all anymore. Many of the collective movements in which I once took part, directly or indirectly, seem to lead to a dead end (153).

Arcand's films deal with the personal over the political, and the lack of mass critical reception in the United States (actually, he has done very well on the art house circuit) is a function of the deeply personal nature of his work. Arcand's films sketch a world that is resolutely his own, yet resolutely wedded to the culture of Canada. From his early short, *Champlain* (1964), for the National Film Board of Canada, to *Jesus of Montreal* (1989) and his most recent film, *Love and Human Remains* (1993), Arcand seems most interested in exploring the territory of the human heart rather than dealing with issues on a larger scale. Yet this larger view of persons and things is embraced in all his films through the medium of human frailty and interaction, as the characters in his films keep screwing up in their possibly hopeless quest for a better understanding of their humanity, and the tasks that they feel compelled to complete within the limited time span of human existence. Above all else, Arcand seems most compelled by issues of faith and perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Loiselle and McIlroy's book emerges finally as a solid and well-researched consideration of Arcand's films, covering Arcand's work as a documentarist (in an essay by Réal La Rochelle), his early fiction films (an excellent essay by Gene Walz), the question of "gender relations" in *Decline* (Denise Perusse), and a superb essay by Bart Testa on *Jesus of Montreal*, along with a number of additional critical essays. My favorite section, however, is Loiselle's long interview with Arcand himself, in which the film-maker seems pragmatic, self-effacing, and winningly modest about his career. Capped by Brian McIlroy's painstakingly detailed filmography of Arcand's work, *Auteur/Provocateur* is an essential volume in understanding Arcand's films.

WHEELER WINSTON DIXON

■ Wheeler Winston Dixon is Chairperson of the Film Studies Program, University of Nebraska, Lincoln. His most recent book is *It Looks at You: The Returned Gaze of Cinema*.

Censorship and the Permissive Society

British Cinema and Theatre 1955–1965

By Anthony Aldgate. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. $45.00.

When I grew up in London in the 50s I participated, like many others, in a peculiarly British rite of cinematic childhood. I stood outside the cinema, and, if the film was marked "A" (Adult Only), would address any passing adult with the words "Please sir, can you take me in?" If the film was an "H" or horror film, like *Frankenstein*, I would put aside my school cap, borrow my elder brother's hat and raincoat, and try to appear at least 16 years old. If the film was a "U" picture sanctioned for universal or general audiences, like *Bambi*, I had no problem.

This rating system had been around for years before I came on the scene. It was, in fact, the brainchild of the British Board of Film Censors, an independent body set up in 1912. The task of the Board, or B.B.F.C., was to decide which films were fit for British eyes, and under what conditions. Rarely did the Board ban a film. Most of its work was concerned with suggesting modifications and cuts to producers, so that the integrity and purity of the viewers' souls could be preserved.

Censorship and the Permissive Society looks at the work of the Board between 1955 and 1965, and examines in detail the progress of 15 films through the hands of the censors. At the same time, it explores the predicament faced by progressive writers and directors, and highlights the debate over the liberalizing aspects of change affecting British society at the time. The book is short, but makes fascinating reading.

First Aldgate sketches in the necessary background. The period from 1955 to 1965 was a key decade in the postwar social and cultural history of Britain. The country was emerging from the doldrums and lassitude of the early 50s and moving toward the permissive society of the 60s. A move towards decensorship was loosening traditional constraints on the arts. On the stage, John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* heralded the rise of a new type of play: bitter, working class, and critical. Osborne's iconoclasm was echoed in the work of other playwrights such as Shelagh Delaney and Arnold Wesker, and in the novels of Alan Sillitoe, Kingsley Amis, John Braine, John Wain, and Stanley Barstow.

Anthony Aldgate, a senior lecturer at the British Open University, shows that the battle for progress was not easy. Neither on the stage nor in the cinema was censorship easily relinquished. Drawing upon a mass of recently released or hitherto unseen documentation—including records and files from the B.B.F.C. and the Lord Chamberlain's Office (the theatrical censor)—Aldgate charts the impact of censorship upon the leading playwrights and directors of the time.

One extremely interesting aspect of the book is the way it highlights the links between theater and film censorship. Thus one sees, for example, how the battering that *Look Back in Anger* took at the hands of the Lord Chamberlain's Office is repeated at the hands of the B.B.F.C. In the end, theatrical censorship was abandoned in 1968, opening up the way for the power and social sweep of new writers; censorship in film, however, was to linger on into the Thatcher years.

The B.B.F.C. worked in two ways. Most of the time it examined a film at the script stage, making comments and suggestions to the producer. Occasionally it examined the film after production. Most producers opted for the script submission formula, because alterations could be made easily at little cost. To submit a film at postproduction stage was risky, as the film might be banned outright.

In the end, the power of the Board rested on two simple facts of life. First, without the approval of the Board a producer was unlikely to get a financing loan or a distribution guarantee. Second, a film could not be publicly shown in a British cinema without the approval of the Board.

In practice, the Board was reluctant to totally dismiss a film. This meant that the main battle with the producer was over the rating category for serious and difficult films like *Room at the Top* or *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. The producer's goal was to be awarded an "A," which meant that even children under 16 could see the film if accompanied by an adult. More subtly, an "A" meant the film was fine for a broad audience.

The "X" category was to be avoided. This rating had superseded the old "H" category, and indicated a highly restricted adult film. Films rated "X" tended to be tainted with the odor of Continental sex and sleaze, and were viewed like the plague by the two main film circuits. An "X" rating usually meant the film wouldn't be sent abroad to a film festival, nor could it be shown at a Royal Command Performance. *Look Back in Anger* and *Room at the Top* were both awarded "X" ratings.

What becomes gloomily clear from Aldgate's case study is that while the Board saw itself as the guardian of good taste, it had no clear criteria for its judgments. Professing to work in the public interest and to know what was best for it, it banned bad language, swearing, nudity, and excessive violence. It was frightened of realistic sex and tried desperately to keep controversial subjects off the screen. It objected to anti-patriotic statements and made only the most pathetic attempts to understand audiences and audience reception.

What Aldgate does superbly is give us the chapter and verse to all the main battles between producers and the Board, which direly illustrate all the above points: *Spare the Rod* should not be shown because it is too critical of the teaching profession; beware of *The L-Shaped Room* because it shows a homosexual in a sympathetic light.

To support its patronizing and elitist judgments, the Board also indulged in amateur literary criticism. Thus, for one member of the Board, John Osborne is merely a hack writer with a cliché-ridden mind. For another member, Alan Sillitoe is merely a stupid, class-conscious Communist propagandist. Such was the dismissal of the writer of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and the winner of the coveted Hawthornden literary prize.

Many of the comments of the Board are given in detail, and make sad reading. The attitude is always an uninformed "We know what is best for you." Neither do producers come off particularly well in this overview. The one figure to emerge with some credit from Aldgate's study is John Trevelyan, Secretary of the Board from 1958. While most Board members looked to the past, Trevelyan seemed to realize that the old order was finished. Thus it was his concern for British filmmaking and his spirit of liberal reform that did so much

to bring about a loosening of the Board's attitude in the early 60s. After his resignation he wrote, "Times change, and we must change with them."

My only complaint of Aldgate's book is that he didn't widen out just a little bit more from his case study. It would have been interesting to compare the Board's procedures and the American Production Code. Similarly, it would have been worthwhile to look at the U.S. legal system's attitude to free speech and censorship, and compare it to England's vagueness on the subject. I also think Aldgate could have added a useful chapter (at least for Americans) explaining the subtleties of the English class system, and the background of elitism that governed the Board's judgments.

From a distance it can be seen that the Board was fighting a losing battle against a cultural revolution that it failed to understand. When the Obscene Publications Act was passed in 1959, and an unexpurgated edition of *Lady Chatterly's Lover* was made available to the British public, one knew the main battle of freedom from literary censorship had been won. For film, however, the battle lasted another ten years, till the coming of *Alfie*, *If . . .*, *Easy Rider*, *The Wild Bunch*, and *A Clockwork Orange*.

The battle against censorship was fought by people like Lindsay Anderson and Tony Richardson for the freedom to make adult pictures for adult audiences. Today the Western cinema is devoted to comic books and violence. One wonders if the members of the Board are crying in their cups or having the last laugh.

ALAN ROSENTHAL

■ Alan Rosenthal is a writer and filmmaker who teaches at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The Cinema of Max Ophuls

Magisterial Vision and the Figure of Woman

By Susan M. White. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995. $59.50 cloth; $18.50 paper.

A 1954 review in *Mademoiselle* described Max Ophuls' *Madame de . . .* as "old-fashioned, plush, very real, very sumptuous, and yards and yards wide." Although the breezy style inherent to ladies' magazines may seem bizarre when applied to the work of a director whose films are considered to be among the most visually and narratively rich, it in fact speaks to an essential aspect of that work. Ophuls' critical fate as a director has always been determined, to a great degree, by his perceived association with women—from the early characterization (and frequent dismissal) of his films as "women's melodramas" to their more recent resurrection (in the 1980s) by feminist critics on the same grounds. Now, in her thoughtful and impressive study *The Cinema of Max Ophuls: Magisterial Vision and the Figure of Woman*, Susan M. White addresses the manifold implications of that association; she also tackles the question of what it means for Woman to be both the object of representation and the presumed spectator of that representation.

This is no small task, and she does it with the historical sensitivity and theoretical subtlety that the topic requires. In choosing to analyze a wide range of films (organized not chronologically, but around individual films, or clusters of films, and the theoretical concerns they raise), White on the one hand vastly complicates the issues of history and authorial identity. On the other hand, in taking on a director notable for his willingness to make women's stories the focus of his films, White is also obliged to shoulder the formidable weight of recent feminist theory and its (predominantly psychoanalytic) attempts to theorize the relationship between subjectivity, gender, and visual pleasure. In seven densely interwoven, yet effectively autonomous chapters, White draws on feminist theory, psychoanalysis, Marxist economics, and poststructuralist literary theory in order to delineate the psychic and social mechanisms through which the film "texts" construct positions of subjectivity—positions for both the spectators and the characters within the diegesis. It is a testament to the agility of her approach that the encounter between these broad fields of inquiry is fruitful, not fatal, and that the fascinating contradictions produced are not forced into simple resolution. Indeed, what distinguishes her argument from many prrevious efforts along these same lines is a conception of that subjectivity as far more indeterminate and overdetermined, comprised of more nuanced and conflicting pressures than typically has been explored.

Thus, for example, in her analysis of *Madame de . . .*, it is not only the heart-shaped diamond earrings—pawned by Louise (the "Madame de . . . " of the title) at the film's outset—that participate in an economy of investment and exchange. Louise's very femininity, the cinematic representation of her sexual difference, is something, like the earrings, that she possesses only contingently or, even, ironically. As White argues, in this, as in other Ophuls' films, the conventions that position woman as fetishized object are present in *Madame de . . .*, but they are neither fully sustained nor decisively under-

to bring about a loosening of the Board's attitude in the early 60s. After his resignation he wrote, "Times change, and we must change with them."

My only complaint of Aldgate's book is that he didn't widen out just a little bit more from his case study. It would have been interesting to compare the Board's procedures and the American Production Code. Similarly, it would have been worthwhile to look at the U.S. legal system's attitude to free speech and censorship, and compare it to England's vagueness on the subject. I also think Aldgate could have added a useful chapter (at least for Americans) explaining the subtleties of the English class system, and the background of elitism that governed the Board's judgments.

From a distance it can be seen that the Board was fighting a losing battle against a cultural revolution that it failed to understand. When the Obscene Publications Act was passed in 1959, and an unexpurgated edition of *Lady Chatterly's Lover* was made available to the British public, one knew the main battle of freedom from literary censorship had been won. For film, however, the battle lasted another ten years, till the coming of *Alfie*, *If . . .*, *Easy Rider*, *The Wild Bunch*, and *A Clockwork Orange*.

The battle against censorship was fought by people like Lindsay Anderson and Tony Richardson for the freedom to make adult pictures for adult audiences. Today the Western cinema is devoted to comic books and violence. One wonders if the members of the Board are crying in their cups or having the last laugh.

ALAN ROSENTHAL

■ Alan Rosenthal is a writer and filmmaker who teaches at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The Cinema of Max Ophuls

Magisterial Vision and the Figure of Woman

By Susan M. White. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995. $59.50 cloth; $18.50 paper.

A 1954 review in *Mademoiselle* described Max Ophuls' *Madame de . . .* as "old-fashioned, plush, very real, very sumptuous, and yards and yards wide." Although the breezy style inherent to ladies' magazines may seem bizarre when applied to the work of a director whose films are considered to be among the most visually and narratively rich, it in fact speaks to an essential aspect of that work. Ophuls' critical fate as a director has always been determined, to a great degree, by his perceived association with women—from the early characterization (and frequent dismissal) of his films as "women's melodramas" to their more recent resurrection (in the 1980s) by feminist critics on the same grounds. Now, in her thoughtful and impressive study *The Cinema of Max Ophuls: Magisterial Vision and the Figure of Woman*, Susan M. White addresses the manifold implications of that association; she also tackles the question of what it means for Woman to be both the object of representation and the presumed spectator of that representation.

This is no small task, and she does it with the historical sensitivity and theoretical subtlety that the topic requires. In choosing to analyze a wide range of films (organized not chronologically, but around individual films, or clusters of films, and the theoretical concerns they raise), White on the one hand vastly complicates the issues of history and authorial identity. On the other hand, in taking on a director notable for his willingness to make women's stories the focus of his films, White is also obliged to shoulder the formidable weight of recent feminist theory and its (predominantly psychoanalytic) attempts to theorize the relationship between subjectivity, gender, and visual pleasure. In seven densely interwoven, yet effectively autonomous chapters, White draws on feminist theory, psychoanalysis, Marxist economics, and poststructuralist literary theory in order to delineate the psychic and social mechanisms through which the film "texts" construct positions of subjectivity—positions for both the spectators and the characters within the diegesis. It is a testament to the agility of her approach that the encounter between these broad fields of inquiry is fruitful, not fatal, and that the fascinating contradictions produced are not forced into simple resolution. Indeed, what distinguishes her argument from many prrevious efforts along these same lines is a conception of that subjectivity as far more indeterminate and overdetermined, comprised of more nuanced and conflicting pressures than typically has been explored.

Thus, for example, in her analysis of *Madame de . . .*, it is not only the heart-shaped diamond earrings—pawned by Louise (the "Madame de . . . " of the title) at the film's outset—that participate in an economy of investment and exchange. Louise's very femininity, the cinematic representation of her sexual difference, is something, like the earrings, that she possesses only contingently or, even, ironically. As White argues, in this, as in other Ophuls' films, the conventions that position woman as fetishized object are present in *Madame de . . .*, but they are neither fully sustained nor decisively under-

mined. In the end, "the film presents no solution to the pain and injustice evident in representations of sexual difference." And Louise emerges not as an affirmation of sexual stereotypes within patriarchal society, but rather as an example of what White describes as the Ophulsian "scapegoat": a figure who, although portrayed as marginal or threatening to the functioning of bourgeois society, in fact serves as a channel for the very logic of that society and a mirror to its contradictions.

While a number of broad themes emerge in the course of White's discussions, what truly binds her observations together are not overarching conclusions, but rather the conceptual framework that emerges from her analyses. That framework is figured most powerfully in the motif of circulation, the "dialectical synthesis of the moving and the fixed," through which White traces the relationship of individuals and representations to the dominant ideologies of bourgeois capitalism. It is a compelling approach, and one that enables her to pull together several interrelated issues—arguments not only about the monetary or libidinal economies present in these films, but also about the film's unique cinematic qualities, the dazzling formal and narrative choreographies that characterize Ophuls' work.

In addition, the notion of circulation offers a model for probing issues of mastery and control within the realm of cinematic representation in general; it is a model that clearly moves beyond the association of fetishism, male visual mastery, and narrative movement established by Laura Mulvey in her foundational work on narrative cinema and the representation of women. For in the more fluid conception that White applies to Ophuls' work, mastery of the cinematic image is revealed to be always partial or momentary at best. The figure of woman is never, finally, "caught," in the sense that her position as spectacle for a patriarchal visual regime is never fully secured. However, as this book suggests, her image becomes the arena within which the contradictions of spectatorial, social, and economic power are played out.

White intentionally opens up as many avenues of inquiry and debate as she closes. And we might hope, as she does, that her work on the textually inscribed spectator "will be followed up by specific research on the [actual] spectators of these films," as well as on the institutional practices associated with them. Nevertheless, as an example of historically responsive *and* responsible textual analysis, *The Cinema of Max Ophuls* is an important contribution, not only to the field of Ophuls' studies, but to the continuing pursuit of a politically oriented film theory.

NINA ROSENBLATT

■ Nina Rosenblatt is a doctoral candidate in the Art History Department at Columbia University.

David Lynch

By Michel Chion. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1995. $45.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Michel Chion intends his analysis of David Lynch's career "to inform and to provide matter for reflection, and to transmit and to take a position." In the former, Chion succeeds admirably, presenting a comprehensive overview of Lynch's work, with special attention to the peculiarities, inconsistencies, and curiosities across his films and television programs. Chion's "position" on this data is much more elusive. While he suggests several formal ways in which Lynch differs from mainstream Hollywood, Chion never gathers these observations, however provocative, into a meaningful synthesis of Lynch's contributions to American film. The result is a monograph that certainly extends critical understanding of individual Lynch works while never committing to a sustained or coherent perspective on the film-maker.

The book begins with four chapters considering Lynch from his first short film in 1967 (*Six Figures*) through the 1992 feature *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*. The chapters are pitched somewhat curiously between biographical information (superficial and largely covered elsewhere), textual analyses of the films, and accounts of reception, particularly the disparity between European and American critical and public response to Lynch. Given this structure, Chion seems to be constructing a "traditional" auteur study—suggesting links between Lynch's personal situations and his creative work, arguing for continuities and developments across the films. However, Chion is also unconstrained by the limitations of auteur study: he readily acknowledges failures of execution and regressions on Lynch's part.

The level of analysis varies considerably chapter to chapter. Most intriguing is Chion's interpretation of *Blue Velvet*. Starting with the logical flaws within the narrative, Chion builds a convincing argument that the film is a dream, albeit a structured one. Teasing out elaborate and compelling interpretations of the surrealistic sex scenes and the construction of the family within the film, Chion reveals Lynch's universe: "a model which may serve in all the later films (but which he will try to

mined. In the end, "the film presents no solution to the pain and injustice evident in representations of sexual difference." And Louise emerges not as an affirmation of sexual stereotypes within patriarchal society, but rather as an example of what White describes as the Ophulsian "scapegoat": a figure who, although portrayed as marginal or threatening to the functioning of bourgeois society, in fact serves as a channel for the very logic of that society and a mirror to its contradictions.

While a number of broad themes emerge in the course of White's discussions, what truly binds her observations together are not overarching conclusions, but rather the conceptual framework that emerges from her analyses. That framework is figured most powerfully in the motif of circulation, the "dialectical synthesis of the moving and the fixed," through which White traces the relationship of individuals and representations to the dominant ideologies of bourgeois capitalism. It is a compelling approach, and one that enables her to pull together several interrelated issues—arguments not only about the monetary or libidinal economies present in these films, but also about the film's unique cinematic qualities, the dazzling formal and narrative choreographies that characterize Ophuls' work.

In addition, the notion of circulation offers a model for probing issues of mastery and control within the realm of cinematic representation in general; it is a model that clearly moves beyond the association of fetishism, male visual mastery, and narrative movement established by Laura Mulvey in her foundational work on narrative cinema and the representation of women. For in the more fluid conception that White applies to Ophuls' work, mastery of the cinematic image is revealed to be always partial or momentary at best. The figure of woman is never, finally, "caught," in the sense that her position as spectacle for a patriarchal visual regime is never fully secured. However, as this book suggests, her image becomes the arena within which the contradictions of spectatorial, social, and economic power are played out.

White intentionally opens up as many avenues of inquiry and debate as she closes. And we might hope, as she does, that her work on the textually inscribed spectator "will be followed up by specific research on the [actual] spectators of these films," as well as on the institutional practices associated with them. Nevertheless, as an example of historically responsive *and* responsible textual analysis, *The Cinema of Max Ophuls* is an important contribution, not only to the field of Ophuls' studies, but to the continuing pursuit of a politically oriented film theory.

NINA ROSENBLATT

■ Nina Rosenblatt is a doctoral candidate in the Art History Department at Columbia University.

David Lynch

By Michel Chion. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1995. $45.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Michel Chion intends his analysis of David Lynch's career "to inform and to provide matter for reflection, and to transmit and to take a position." In the former, Chion succeeds admirably, presenting a comprehensive overview of Lynch's work, with special attention to the peculiarities, inconsistencies, and curiosities across his films and television programs. Chion's "position" on this data is much more elusive. While he suggests several formal ways in which Lynch differs from mainstream Hollywood, Chion never gathers these observations, however provocative, into a meaningful synthesis of Lynch's contributions to American film. The result is a monograph that certainly extends critical understanding of individual Lynch works while never committing to a sustained or coherent perspective on the film-maker.

The book begins with four chapters considering Lynch from his first short film in 1967 (*Six Figures*) through the 1992 feature *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*. The chapters are pitched somewhat curiously between biographical information (superficial and largely covered elsewhere), textual analyses of the films, and accounts of reception, particularly the disparity between European and American critical and public response to Lynch. Given this structure, Chion seems to be constructing a "traditional" auteur study—suggesting links between Lynch's personal situations and his creative work, arguing for continuities and developments across the films. However, Chion is also unconstrained by the limitations of auteur study: he readily acknowledges failures of execution and regressions on Lynch's part.

The level of analysis varies considerably chapter to chapter. Most intriguing is Chion's interpretation of *Blue Velvet*. Starting with the logical flaws within the narrative, Chion builds a convincing argument that the film is a dream, albeit a structured one. Teasing out elaborate and compelling interpretations of the surrealistic sex scenes and the construction of the family within the film, Chion reveals Lynch's universe: "a model which may serve in all the later films (but which he will try to

renew), a setting (Lynchtown), a structural scheme, and a new type of romanticism" (98). This analysis—thorough and illuminating—is followed by a rather bland deconstruction of "Twin Peaks," Lynch's ambitious 29-part television serial centered on the question "Who killed Laura Palmer?" Of course, "Twin Peaks" is a mystery centered as much on uncovering the dark side and secret lives in small-town American life as discovering the murderer of an enigmatic teen girl. While admitting that the episodic format and length of the project represent a model of structural freedom for Lynch, Chion never comes to terms critically with the differences achieved by Lynch in the project. Relying too heavily on recounting character, character types, and plot lines, Chion offers interpretations which seem curious and never fully developed; he claims, for instance, that the cult success of the series derives from "the regressive importance assigned to food" (112). As a result, the reader is faced with a rambling, disconnected account of "Twin Peaks" that is never integrated into an overall framework, as is *Blue Velvet*.

One of the threads connecting chapters is Chion's claim that Lynch has been searching for a non-psychological cinema, "a cinema with a more ample, epic tone and free, unpredictable constructions" (123). Particularly since Chion argues fervently for complex psychological motivations at play in the character dynamics and relationships of *Blue Velvet*, a non-psychological cinema is a strange way to define Lynch's works. Rather, the psychological seems crucial to Lynch, only filtered through the theatrical, extreme world constructed within the films. The juxtaposition of character and environment appears to be one of the key differences to Lynch's usage of character. Emphasis on character types, identified or suggested by strong physical characteristics, is not that different from character in Classical (and post-Classical) Hollywood cinema. With Lynch, however, the choice of physical characteristics—tending toward the grotesque or bizarre—is what makes his characters so distinctive.

Throughout the book, Chion also highlights the function of music and sound in Lynch's films. Given Chion's groundbreaking work on analysis of the sound/image relationship in *Audio-Vision*, it is not surprising that he is sensitive to the sound track of these films. These sections are unusually enlightening, in terms of how sound operates for Lynch and more generally how sound design functions, technically and aesthetically, in contemporary film. Arguing that Lynch uses sound in a precise manner throughout the films, Chion claims that, paradoxically, a continuity is established by the discontinuities in sound. While images also break maintenance in time and space in Lynch's films, sound is an even more powerful tool in the creation of Lynch's universe. In addition, collaborations between Lynch, composer Angelo Badalamenti, and sound designer Alan Splet are traced throughout, demonstrating that this aspect is a crucial, and collaborative, part of Lynch's originality.

If my criticisms center on Chion's being too diffuse and suggestive at the sacrifice of a developing and coherent argument, the fifth and final chapter ("The Lynch Kit") redeems many of these faults. "The Lynch Kit" is an alphabetical listing of categories crucial to an understanding of Lynch's universe, with each listing receiving a short, analytical explanation of its particular importance. The first category, the alphabet, illustrates the engaging and far-reaching quality of the Lynch kit. Chion starts by discussing Lynch's abstract short film, *The Alphabet*, focusing on images of isolated letters moving through space. These fragmented letters are then traced through "Twin Peaks" and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, in which victims have tiny letters placed under their nails. At this point, shifting to *Blue Velvet*, Chion addresses the epistemology of the word "letter" to expand his analysis even further. The result is a meditation on a very specific element of Lynch's work and an analysis that is both suggestive and startling in its scope and application. Not limited by chronology, biography, or textual analysis, Chion here expands the meanings constructed within and across texts, shifting the emphasis to the reader and viewer to make connections between Lynch kit entries, the films, the background, and the film-maker. Chion's fascination and enthusiasm with Lynch comes across strongly, and the format makes one want to jettison the opening chapters in favor of an even larger and more comprehensive Lynch kit.

JUSTIN WYATT

■ Justin Wyatt teaches in the Department of Radio, TV and Film at the University of North Texas.

Direct Theory

Experimental Film/Video As Major Genre

By Edward S. Small. Carbondale, IL: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1995. $19.95 cloth; $13.95 paper.

In barely more than a hundred pages, Edward Small picks his way through the history of experimental

renew), a setting (Lynchtown), a structural scheme, and a new type of romanticism" (98). This analysis—thorough and illuminating—is followed by a rather bland deconstruction of "Twin Peaks," Lynch's ambitious 29-part television serial centered on the question "Who killed Laura Palmer?" Of course, "Twin Peaks" is a mystery centered as much on uncovering the dark side and secret lives in small-town American life as discovering the murderer of an enigmatic teen girl. While admitting that the episodic format and length of the project represent a model of structural freedom for Lynch, Chion never comes to terms critically with the differences achieved by Lynch in the project. Relying too heavily on recounting character, character types, and plot lines, Chion offers interpretations which seem curious and never fully developed; he claims, for instance, that the cult success of the series derives from "the regressive importance assigned to food" (112). As a result, the reader is faced with a rambling, disconnected account of "Twin Peaks" that is never integrated into an overall framework, as is *Blue Velvet*.

One of the threads connecting chapters is Chion's claim that Lynch has been searching for a non-psychological cinema, "a cinema with a more ample, epic tone and free, unpredictable constructions" (123). Particularly since Chion argues fervently for complex psychological motivations at play in the character dynamics and relationships of *Blue Velvet*, a non-psychological cinema is a strange way to define Lynch's works. Rather, the psychological seems crucial to Lynch, only filtered through the theatrical, extreme world constructed within the films. The juxtaposition of character and environment appears to be one of the key differences to Lynch's usage of character. Emphasis on character types, identified or suggested by strong physical characteristics, is not that different from character in Classical (and post-Classical) Hollywood cinema. With Lynch, however, the choice of physical characteristics—tending toward the grotesque or bizarre—is what makes his characters so distinctive.

Throughout the book, Chion also highlights the function of music and sound in Lynch's films. Given Chion's groundbreaking work on analysis of the sound/image relationship in *Audio-Vision*, it is not surprising that he is sensitive to the sound track of these films. These sections are unusually enlightening, in terms of how sound operates for Lynch and more generally how sound design functions, technically and aesthetically, in contemporary film. Arguing that Lynch uses sound in a precise manner throughout the films, Chion claims that, paradoxically, a continuity is established by the discontinuities in sound. While images also break maintenance in time and space in Lynch's films, sound is an even more powerful tool in the creation of Lynch's universe. In addition, collaborations between Lynch, composer Angelo Badalamenti, and sound designer Alan Splet are traced throughout, demonstrating that this aspect is a crucial, and collaborative, part of Lynch's originality.

If my criticisms center on Chion's being too diffuse and suggestive at the sacrifice of a developing and coherent argument, the fifth and final chapter ("The Lynch Kit") redeems many of these faults. "The Lynch Kit" is an alphabetical listing of categories crucial to an understanding of Lynch's universe, with each listing receiving a short, analytical explanation of its particular importance. The first category, the alphabet, illustrates the engaging and far-reaching quality of the Lynch kit. Chion starts by discussing Lynch's abstract short film, *The Alphabet*, focusing on images of isolated letters moving through space. These fragmented letters are then traced through "Twin Peaks" and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, in which victims have tiny letters placed under their nails. At this point, shifting to *Blue Velvet*, Chion addresses the epistemology of the word "letter" to expand his analysis even further. The result is a meditation on a very specific element of Lynch's work and an analysis that is both suggestive and startling in its scope and application. Not limited by chronology, biography, or textual analysis, Chion here expands the meanings constructed within and across texts, shifting the emphasis to the reader and viewer to make connections between Lynch kit entries, the films, the background, and the film-maker. Chion's fascination and enthusiasm with Lynch comes across strongly, and the format makes one want to jettison the opening chapters in favor of an even larger and more comprehensive Lynch kit.

JUSTIN WYATT

■ Justin Wyatt teaches in the Department of Radio, TV and Film at the University of North Texas.

Direct Theory

Experimental Film/Video As Major Genre

By Edward S. Small. Carbondale, IL: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1995. $19.95 cloth; $13.95 paper.

In barely more than a hundred pages, Edward Small picks his way through the history of experimental

film and video in order to substantiate three claims: that despite medium-specific differences, experimental film and video can be treated as a single genre; that this genre should not be marginalized and subordinated to more familiar genres of documentary and fictional cinema and television—that it is, in other words, a "major" genre in its own right; and that the most significant accomplishment of the experimental genre has been the integration of theory and praxis in works that are, in and of themselves, theoretical—not because they embody or illustrate theories or because they take some theoretical proposition as a theme, but because they "function as a mode of theory quite directly."

The third claim is the most controversial (as Small readily admits), but it is also the most far-reaching in its implications for understanding and appreciating experimental film and video. As such, it deserves much fuller treatment than is possible in a book this short. Small introduces his three claims in two opening chapters of about ten pages each, and then attempts to substantiate them in the next four chapters, which are devoted to cursory surveys of European avant-garde film of the 1920s, North American avant-garde film from the 1930s to the early 1970s, and experimental video of the 1970s and 1980s. Since Small breaks no ground in historical coverage and draws virtually all of his examples from the familiar canon of experimental/avant-garde works, the principal value of his study lies in the three propositions summarized above.

Clearest and most convincing are his delineation of the features that make a production "experimental" and his argument that film and video productions sharing these "technical/structural characteristics," constitute a single genre. These characteristics are: economic and artistic autonomy; brevity; an affinity for and innovative use of technological developments; extensive use of mental imagery; an avoidance of verbal language and narrative structure; and reflexivity. Other critics have used one or more of these characteristics to distinguish experimental films and/or videos from their mainstream counterparts, but no one, as far as I know, has brought them all together to characterize a single genre of experimental work in both film and video.

Since, as Small admits, there are "subclasses of experimental production that at once contest and question the major generic boundaries" he seeks to establish, one might ask why one should insist on the notion of genre at all. For Small, it is a way of elevating experimental film/video from a minor, subordinate (or totally ignored) subcategory of film and television genres to equal status with the other "major genres" of "actuality film/video" and "fictive narratives." While I agree that experimental works do not get the attention they deserve, I am not convinced that a realignment of genres will help very much. On the other hand, Small's method of constructing generic distinctions on the basis of technical/structural characteristics makes a useful contribution to genre theory, and it offers an effective way of introducing experimental work to the uninitiated and explaining its worth to the skeptical.

Small's main thesis—that a film or video can be theory—is likely to be greeted with skepticism by most readers, whatever their attitude toward experimental film and video may be. It challenges the logocentric tradition of Western thought in general, and the allegiance to that tradition among film theorists in particular. Small quotes Dudley Andrew: "No one would equate a film theory, which after all is merely an order of words, with the experience of a film," and then proceeds to do exactly that, finding support for his equation of theory and film/video in four different disciplines: cinema, psychology, physiology, and semiotics.

Small draws upon (1) Eisenstein's effort to produce a direct experience of dialectical thinking through the use of montage; (2) Rudolf Arnheim's application of gestalt psychology to the study of visual perception in his influential work, *Visual Thinking*; (3) the discovery that the right hemisphere of the human brain processes visual information without the mediation of verbal language (which lies within the domain of the left hemisphere); and (4) de Saussure's differentiation of "visual signifiers" or "symbols" from the arbitrary, unmotivated signifiers of verbal language, which makes them, in Small's view, "right-brain specific" and suited to Arnheim's categories of "visual thinking."

Unfortunately, these diverse considerations of nonverbal thought are not discussed in detail, nor is the relationship between them clearly established and rigorously defended on theoretical grounds. Small counts on his brief analyses of individual experimental works to provide concrete, pragmatic support for his thesis, and, to some extent, they do. It must be noted, however, that his most persuasive examples come from "structural," "materialist," or what Malcolm LeGrice called "abstract" films, which have long been recognized for their reflexive engagement with theoretical issues involving the material, perceptual, and ideological dimensions of the cinematic apparatus. So it is not surprising to find them offered as prototypes of "direct theory." One would have liked to see more attention given to "direct theory" in experimental films and videos that are not so obviously "theoretical."

Despite these limitations, however, Small's thesis merits serious consideration by film/video theorists, as well as by students and scholars seeking a better understanding of the least understood genre of film and video.

"Direct theory" is a provocative concept that challenges common assumptions about the nature of theory, and carried to its logical conclusions, it could effect a radical change in the way we think about—and with—experimental film and video.

WILLIAM C. WEES

■ William C. Wees is Professor of English at McGill University and author of *Light Moving in Time: Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film* and *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*.

The Dynasty Years

Hollywood Television and Critical Media Studies

By Jostein Gripsrud. New York: Routledge, 1995. $69.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Jostein Gripsrud's *The Dynasty Years: Hollywood Television and Critical Media Studies* is really two books in one: a case study of the television series "Dynasty" in Norway in the mid-1980s, and a sustained inquiry into how one goes about doing theoretically informed media studies. During the 1980s, Norway experienced the introduction of videocassettes, the founding of a commercial television station, and satellite broadcasts from abroad. This rapidly expanding and shifting environment provides a context for his book, whose contours Gripsrud concisely describes as "a critical discussion of central theoretical and methodological positions in recent media and cultural studies, conceived as a wide, crossdisciplinary field, stretching from social scientific mass communication research and cultural sociology to film, television and literary studies," all within the context of "Dynasty's" reception in Norway.

The decision to show "Dynasty" on NRK generated considerable debate in Norway in 1983 and after, and Gripsrud uses the series to provide focus for his blended approach, which he describes as "methodological triangulation," or "the simultaneous use of many approaches to the same problematic or phenomenon" (4). Gripsrud's intellectual orientation, influenced by and in dialogue with the work of Adorno and the Frankfurt School, is anchored in what he calls "an updated version of the non-dogmatic marxist tradition." He argues that serious work in media studies must "consider the (whole) *social context, the qualitative dimensions of the media texts themselves*, and the *historicity of both* when studying the interplay between music/media and audiences" (7).

This conviction leads to the book's systematic organization, which might be concisely summarized as an exploration of the production, reception, text, and cultural significance of "Dynasty" in Norway. Following the theory/method introduction, chapter 1 treats the production of "Dynasty." Based partly on interviews with producers Aaron Spelling and Esther and Richard Shapiro, and with writers Robert and Eileen Pollack, who were brought in for the series' second season, the chapter rejects notions of the "death of the author" and argues that authorship needs to be rethought in popular culture forms where production is not predominantly individual. Attributing key authorship roles to the Shapiros and the Pollacks, Gripsrud argues that if one is interested not just in a text's meanings, but also in "the meanings of the whole communicative process as a social phenomenon, the role of authors/producers becomes highly relevant" (65). Although their work in production does not *determine* reception, Gripsrud argues, it surely helps cue and guide it.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the reception of "Dynasty" in Norway. The first treats what Gripsrud calls the "public reception": the intense debate in Norway about whether a prime-time soap opera ought to be shown on NRK. Politics make strange bedfellows, and the anti-"Dynasty" position was to some extent shared by leaders of the socialist left and the Christian right. Partly because the public broadcasting ethic in Norway has long been less elitist than in England (Gripsrud does a good job explaining the historical and cultural roots of that ethic), "Dynasty" was purchased and shown.

Following the discussion of public reception, Gripsrud tackles the more elusive but perhaps more significant question of "domestic reception": how individual people derived meaning and pleasure from what they watched and listened to in the "Dynasty" series. Gripsrud begins exploring this thorny question with the results of a 1984 audience survey, while openly acknowledging the limitations of such research. He then proposes that reception is bounded and guided by four dimensions: 1) the text itself, including other texts that are similar in genre; 2) secondary documents like studio publicity and feature articles or reviews; 3) tertiary information in the form of letters to the press, gossip, and private conversation; 4) the individual viewer's previous experience with television and other media, as well as his/her broader social experience (here Gripsrud appropriates Jauss's notion of "horizon of expectations"). This fascinating argument suggests that two modes of reception—one camp and one realist—were shaped by

"Direct theory" is a provocative concept that challenges common assumptions about the nature of theory, and carried to its logical conclusions, it could effect a radical change in the way we think about—and with—experimental film and video.

WILLIAM C. WEES

■ William C. Wees is Professor of English at McGill University and author of *Light Moving in Time: Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film* and *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*.

The Dynasty Years

Hollywood Television and Critical Media Studies

By Jostein Gripsrud. New York: Routledge, 1995. $69.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Jostein Gripsrud's *The Dynasty Years: Hollywood Television and Critical Media Studies* is really two books in one: a case study of the television series "Dynasty" in Norway in the mid-1980s, and a sustained inquiry into how one goes about doing theoretically informed media studies. During the 1980s, Norway experienced the introduction of videocassettes, the founding of a commercial television station, and satellite broadcasts from abroad. This rapidly expanding and shifting environment provides a context for his book, whose contours Gripsrud concisely describes as "a critical discussion of central theoretical and methodological positions in recent media and cultural studies, conceived as a wide, crossdisciplinary field, stretching from social scientific mass communication research and cultural sociology to film, television and literary studies," all within the context of "Dynasty's" reception in Norway.

The decision to show "Dynasty" on NRK generated considerable debate in Norway in 1983 and after, and Gripsrud uses the series to provide focus for his blended approach, which he describes as "methodological triangulation," or "the simultaneous use of many approaches to the same problematic or phenomenon" (4). Gripsrud's intellectual orientation, influenced by and in dialogue with the work of Adorno and the Frankfurt School, is anchored in what he calls "an updated version of the non-dogmatic marxist tradition." He argues that serious work in media studies must "consider the (whole) *social context, the qualitative dimensions of the media texts themselves*, and the *historicity of both* when studying the interplay between music/media and audiences" (7).

This conviction leads to the book's systematic organization, which might be concisely summarized as an exploration of the production, reception, text, and cultural significance of "Dynasty" in Norway. Following the theory/method introduction, chapter 1 treats the production of "Dynasty." Based partly on interviews with producers Aaron Spelling and Esther and Richard Shapiro, and with writers Robert and Eileen Pollack, who were brought in for the series' second season, the chapter rejects notions of the "death of the author" and argues that authorship needs to be rethought in popular culture forms where production is not predominantly individual. Attributing key authorship roles to the Shapiros and the Pollacks, Gripsrud argues that if one is interested not just in a text's meanings, but also in "the meanings of the whole communicative process as a social phenomenon, the role of authors/producers becomes highly relevant" (65). Although their work in production does not *determine* reception, Gripsrud argues, it surely helps cue and guide it.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the reception of "Dynasty" in Norway. The first treats what Gripsrud calls the "public reception": the intense debate in Norway about whether a prime-time soap opera ought to be shown on NRK. Politics make strange bedfellows, and the anti-"Dynasty" position was to some extent shared by leaders of the socialist left and the Christian right. Partly because the public broadcasting ethic in Norway has long been less elitist than in England (Gripsrud does a good job explaining the historical and cultural roots of that ethic), "Dynasty" was purchased and shown.

Following the discussion of public reception, Gripsrud tackles the more elusive but perhaps more significant question of "domestic reception": how individual people derived meaning and pleasure from what they watched and listened to in the "Dynasty" series. Gripsrud begins exploring this thorny question with the results of a 1984 audience survey, while openly acknowledging the limitations of such research. He then proposes that reception is bounded and guided by four dimensions: 1) the text itself, including other texts that are similar in genre; 2) secondary documents like studio publicity and feature articles or reviews; 3) tertiary information in the form of letters to the press, gossip, and private conversation; 4) the individual viewer's previous experience with television and other media, as well as his/her broader social experience (here Gripsrud appropriates Jauss's notion of "horizon of expectations"). This fascinating argument suggests that two modes of reception—one camp and one realist—were shaped by

whether the viewer read newspapers (which fed a camp response), mixed-gender weeklies (which focused on sensational aspects, especially Alexis's sexual boldness), or women/family weeklies (which emphasized Krystle and "decent" aspects).

Gripsrud's next two chapters turn to genre and textual analysis. Chapter 4 emphasizes genre, reconsidering recent work on the soap opera and seeking to define important features of prime-time soap operas like "Dynasty." Questioning some of the recent feminist work which celebrates the soap opera as a particularly feminine mode of address, Gripsrud goes on to emphasize the importance of repetition and music in prime-time soaps, concluding that the "Dynasty" text is not as polysemic as some critics have argued. Chapter 5 turns to issues of textual analysis—the dominance of plots over character, the importance of tensions and conflicts rooted in the basic setup of characters to develop the plots, the lack of endings, and so on. Gripsrud concludes that in the "Dynasty" text, "meaning is simply less important than an 'emotional ride' which is produced by a cleverly organized, musically sustained series of what, from a narrative point of view, are mostly repetitive events or moments." Disturbing thematic implications are subdued by thrills, excitement, and sentiment; the traditional moral didacticism of 19th-century melodrama is replaced by a greater emphasis on presenting and evoking emotion.

The final chapter looks at the production, reception, and text of "Dynasty" in the broader context of social and cultural history while examining the role of television criticism. Here Gripsrud concludes by calling for "an improved theoretical understanding of television, one which accommodates the real historical and global multifariousness of the medium, related to in-depth empirical analyses of specific institutional, textual, and reception instances." He also argues (again the influence of Adorno) that critique must be a central part of the media researcher's social obligations, one which draws "on a set of 'values,' ideas about what the medium ought to be, ought to be doing" (260), admitting that it may be easier for an intellectual to affect public debates about the media in smaller nation-states like Norway than in large, corporate-dominated and media-saturated countries like the United States.

The Dynasty Years has much to recommend it. Gripsrud jumps centrally into many of the most interesting debates about media production, distribution, reception, and sexual analysis that have taken place in the past decade and a half. Using his case-study material as empirical evidence, he's willing to challenge positions that he feels misguided, like Barthes' "death of the author," the overly celebratory view of the soap opera as a form, or the view which holds that texts necessarily and easily lend themselves to oppositional readings. He also offers a corrective to the dismissive attitude toward Adorno that has become almost ritual in recent popular culture studies. Although I didn't always agree with Gripsrud, I consistently found the book lively, intellectually engaging, and provocative. By examining the experience of one Hollywood television series in a small European country, Gripsrud provides an example of critical media studies well worth our sustained attention.

CHARLES MALAND

■ Charles Maland teaches at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Fields of Vision

Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology and Photography

Edited by Leslie Devereaux and Roger Hillman. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995. $55.00 cloth; $20.00 paper.

For the past 25 years, much scholarly debate has focused on the crisis of representation in the humanities and social sciences. Framed by the paradigmatic language of Thomas Kuhn and steeped in a poststructural concoction mixed by, among others, Derrida and Foucault, the debate continues to rage in much of the academy. Is representation an ontological possibility? What are the ethical ramifications of representation's power dynamic? Having moved from the age of mechanical to an era of electronic reproduction, it is curious that the debate about representation has been spearheaded by philosophers and literary theorists—wordsmiths—rather than scholars of image-making—not to forget the image-makers themselves.

Enter the anthology, *Fields of Vision*, a valiant attempt to refocus scholarly debate onto the jagged slope of the visual. It is the hope of editors Leslie Devereaux and Roger Hillman that such a tack might render more coherent the interminably fragmented discourse on representation. The editors' goal presents a tall order for any text, especially one shaped into a genre—the anthology—that is usually riddled with textual problems. Although many of the chapters in the volume are exceptional contributions to scholarship on visual studies, the volume, as a text, seems as fragmented as the debate on

whether the viewer read newspapers (which fed a camp response), mixed-gender weeklies (which focused on sensational aspects, especially Alexis's sexual boldness), or women/family weeklies (which emphasized Krystle and "decent" aspects).

Gripsrud's next two chapters turn to genre and textual analysis. Chapter 4 emphasizes genre, reconsidering recent work on the soap opera and seeking to define important features of prime-time soap operas like "Dynasty." Questioning some of the recent feminist work which celebrates the soap opera as a particularly feminine mode of address, Gripsrud goes on to emphasize the importance of repetition and music in prime-time soaps, concluding that the "Dynasty" text is not as polysemic as some critics have argued. Chapter 5 turns to issues of textual analysis—the dominance of plots over character, the importance of tensions and conflicts rooted in the basic setup of characters to develop the plots, the lack of endings, and so on. Gripsrud concludes that in the "Dynasty" text, "meaning is simply less important than an 'emotional ride' which is produced by a cleverly organized, musically sustained series of what, from a narrative point of view, are mostly repetitive events or moments." Disturbing thematic implications are subdued by thrills, excitement, and sentiment; the traditional moral didacticism of 19th-century melodrama is replaced by a greater emphasis on presenting and evoking emotion.

The final chapter looks at the production, reception, and text of "Dynasty" in the broader context of social and cultural history while examining the role of television criticism. Here Gripsrud concludes by calling for "an improved theoretical understanding of television, one which accommodates the real historical and global multifariousness of the medium, related to in-depth empirical analyses of specific institutional, textual, and reception instances." He also argues (again the influence of Adorno) that critique must be a central part of the media researcher's social obligations, one which draws "on a set of 'values,' ideas about what the medium ought to be, ought to be doing" (260), admitting that it may be easier for an intellectual to affect public debates about the media in smaller nation-states like Norway than in large, corporate-dominated and media-saturated countries like the United States.

The Dynasty Years has much to recommend it. Gripsrud jumps centrally into many of the most interesting debates about media production, distribution, reception, and sexual analysis that have taken place in the past decade and a half. Using his case-study material as empirical evidence, he's willing to challenge positions that he feels misguided, like Barthes' "death of the author," the overly celebratory view of the soap opera as a form, or the view which holds that texts necessarily and easily lend themselves to oppositional readings. He also offers a corrective to the dismissive attitude toward Adorno that has become almost ritual in recent popular culture studies. Although I didn't always agree with Gripsrud, I consistently found the book lively, intellectually engaging, and provocative. By examining the experience of one Hollywood television series in a small European country, Gripsrud provides an example of critical media studies well worth our sustained attention.

CHARLES MALAND

■ Charles Maland teaches at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Fields of Vision

Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology and Photography

Edited by Leslie Devereaux and Roger Hillman. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995. $55.00 cloth; $20.00 paper.

For the past 25 years, much scholarly debate has focused on the crisis of representation in the humanities and social sciences. Framed by the paradigmatic language of Thomas Kuhn and steeped in a poststructural concoction mixed by, among others, Derrida and Foucault, the debate continues to rage in much of the academy. Is representation an ontological possibility? What are the ethical ramifications of representation's power dynamic? Having moved from the age of mechanical to an era of electronic reproduction, it is curious that the debate about representation has been spearheaded by philosophers and literary theorists—wordsmiths—rather than scholars of image-making—not to forget the image-makers themselves.

Enter the anthology, *Fields of Vision*, a valiant attempt to refocus scholarly debate onto the jagged slope of the visual. It is the hope of editors Leslie Devereaux and Roger Hillman that such a tack might render more coherent the interminably fragmented discourse on representation. The editors' goal presents a tall order for any text, especially one shaped into a genre—the anthology—that is usually riddled with textual problems. Although many of the chapters in the volume are exceptional contributions to scholarship on visual studies, the volume, as a text, seems as fragmented as the debate on

representation that the editors have perspicaciously criticized. Clearly, the multifaceted themes that Devereaux and Hillman wish to explore would be better considered in a rigorously analyzed single- (or joint-) authored text.

The anthology, which is in many ways a useful text, is organized into five sections: An Introductory Essay; Themes; Case Studies: Photography; Case Studies: Film; and The Subject(ive) Voice. In the introductory essay, Devereaux attempts to set the theoretical parameters of the volume. Although she draws the reader's attention to several significant issues embedded in the papers, her essay might been more economical.

The contributors in the section Themes confront "the interplay of film with aesthetic form, with economic and political structures, and with gendered and philosophical concerns embedded in the cultures that produce it" (2). These papers are supposed to present a theoretical crossdisciplinary framework for the more specifically focused papers that follow. They do not meet the standards of their advanced billing. Paul Willemen's paper on "The National" might have been expanded to incorporate an incisive social science and humanities literature on nationalism. George E. Marcus's paper on modernist sensibilities, montage, and recent ethnographic writing sparked much debate among visual anthropologists when it appeared in 1990. From a contemporary vantage, though, his considerable insights on the relations between written and filmic representations in the ethnography of the 1980s contribute profoundly to what is today a mostly exhausted debate in anthropology. Devereaux's contribution, which is written with much verve, concerns the nature of experience as it relates to representation and film. Unfortunately, her discussion of experience and representation, which has a deep and distinguished literature in both philosophy and anthropology, seems incomplete.

Most of the papers by scholars of film and photography are grouped into one of the two sections of Case Studies. For the most part these papers are elegant, albeit narrow discussions of photography and film. The contributions of Anne-Marie Willis, Hillman, and Gino Moliterno are particularly interesting; they explore in various ways the intersecting dimensions of media—between film and novel (Moliterno), between film and photography (Willis), and between vision and sound (Hillman). In none of these case studies, however, do the authors extend themselves very far beyond particular disciplinary concerns.

The best papers in the volume, in my view, appear in the section The Subject(ive) Voice. I like these papers not because they are written by fellow anthropologists (we are, after all, notoriously critical of one another), but because they speak eloquently to contemporary issues of representation—issues that have significance far beyond anthropology's disciplinary frontier. Because space precludes extensive discussion of them, I limit my remarks to the papers of David MacDougall and Faye Ginsburg.

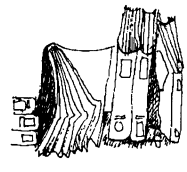
MacDougall has been among the most thoughtful writers in and producers of visual studies. His contribution on the subjective voice in ethnographic film is not only a nuanced study of how voice emerges between filmic frames, but also a careful study of visual anthropology's development. Beyond that, he demonstrates how the search for subjective voice is, ultimately, a search for a "way of looking at the world that is intersubjective and, finally, communal" (250). MacDougall's conclusion is an important one, for it attempts to liberate visual studies from a hermetically sealed compart-mentalism. The visual, for him, is a means to the end of communalism, which becomes all the more important considering that we live in what David Harvey has called the "condition of postmodernity." For Harvey, postmodernity is characterized by the implosion of space and time, the erosion of (national and conceptual) boundaries, and the proliferation of technologies.

The juxtaposition of MacDougall's and Ginsburg's paper's is felicitous, for Ginsburg situates the visual in a politically charged world in which the local and the global are visually, if not electronically, connected. Ginsburg provides much useful information of indigenous media in Australia. But it is reconceptualization of visual anthropology into the study of media and culture that merits scholarly attention. By expanding discussion of media into domains of culture and politics, she opens the study of the visual to the topsy-turvy realities of the contemporary world. Her paper illuminates contemporary fields of vision.

Despite the expansive strengths of several of the papers in *Fields of Vision*, it is yet another anthology on the visual. Most of these, with the notable exception of Lucien Taylor's *Visualizing Theory*, have been mediocre works which have reinforced the marginalization of "visual ways of knowing" in the academy. It is disappointing that *Fields of Vision* is not an exception to this pattern.

PAUL STOLLER

■ Paul Stoller teaches in the Department of Anthropology at West Chester University.



Figures of Light

Actors and Directors Illuminate the Art of Film Acting

By Carole Zucker. New York: Plenum Press, 1995. $24.95.

In this wide-ranging series of interviews conducted by Carole Zucker over a four-year period, contemporary actors and directors discuss the art and craft of film acting. She questions performers about the theory and technique of their craft, how they prepare for and research their roles, and their experiences rehearsing and shooting films—all in an attempt to disentangle performance from the usual gossip about celebrities that obsesses the popular press. Zucker also queries directors about the challenges of handling performers on the set and the kind of acting problems and solutions they have encountered. The interviews include, among performers, Lindsay Crouse, Tommy Lee Jones, Christine Lahti, Richard Dreyfuss, John Lithgow, Lee Grant, and Eli Wallach, and, among directors, Sidney Pollack, Bob Rafelson, Karel Reisz, Lawrence Kasdan, and John Sayles. Sidney Lumet, a great director of actors, is conspicuous by his absence, especially since several of the performers interviewed discuss him with reverence.

The interviews include much interesting personal detail about how the performers or directors approach their screen work, and several fascinating issues emerge, including the value of rehearsal and directors' attitudes toward actors. While many of the actors value rehearsal, the directors are wary of overrehearsing scenes, believing that it tends to flatten and deenergize the performances. Richard Dreyfuss maintains that film directors no longer know anything about film acting, and Lawrence Kasdan (a fine director of actors) believes that, in general, directors don't like actors and are afraid of their demands for rehearsal and for analysis of a role. If Dreyfuss and Kasdan are correct, the attitudes they describe help account for one of the more dispiriting features of contemporary American films—that they too often feature brilliant visual design with minimal emphasis on subtleties of performance and dialogue.

A skillful interviewer, Zucker is exceptionally knowledgable about the intricacies of each artist's career and work. She can thus engage her subjects in a meaningful dialogue about the details of their work, often focusing on the small, but telling, aspects of a scene or film. Her subjects seem appreciative of this close attention and often respond with long and generous replies.

Book-length compilations of interviews tend to produce a fragmented effect because, collectively, the personalities expressing themselves are so diverse and the responses tend to move in many different directions. While these interviews make for compelling reading, the book would have benefited from a substantial chapter summarizing and analysing the different issues and controversies that run through the discussions. As it stands now, the conclusion is brief and unnecessarily florid. It doesn't help much to learn that "it is the actor's task to go into the night of the soul and return intact, to show people that the journey can be made," or that "film actors are the shamans of our culture."

Despite this minor limitation, *Figures of Light* offers an illuminating portrait of contemporary film acting, and, best of all, the interviews are a lot of fun to read.

STEPHEN PRINCE

■ Stephen Prince is the Book Review Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky

A Visual Fugue

By Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994. $47.50 cloth; $24.95 paper.

The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue represents a welcomed revisionist attempt to balance the heretofore dominant view of Tarkovsky—encouraged first and foremost by the director himself—that he was a persecuted martyr victimized by small-minded and still smaller-spirited ideologues and philistines. Authors Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie point out many facts to the contrary: the careers of many Soviet directors sustained far more damage than his; he always had defenders within Goskino; his career never came to a standstill; and all his films were ultimately released. They also favor the view that his small output was more a function of his temperament as an artist than of any obstacles presented by the Soviet film bureaucracy. Indeed, Johnson and Petrie find it hard to imagine the director's full evolution as an artist within a mode of production less insulated from the marketplace. As detailed in their book, Tarkovsky's move West was far from the liberating experience he had naïvely imagined.

Johnson and Petrie portray a Soviet film industry perpetually polarized on the subject of Tarkovsky. In the hands of his enemies, the director's international awards only confirmed charges made in the Soviet press as early as his diploma film—that he drew too heavily on European cinema as a model. On the other hand, the same

Figures of Light

Actors and Directors Illuminate the Art of Film Acting

By Carole Zucker. New York: Plenum Press, 1995. $24.95.

In this wide-ranging series of interviews conducted by Carole Zucker over a four-year period, contemporary actors and directors discuss the art and craft of film acting. She questions performers about the theory and technique of their craft, how they prepare for and research their roles, and their experiences rehearsing and shooting films—all in an attempt to disentangle performance from the usual gossip about celebrities that obsesses the popular press. Zucker also queries directors about the challenges of handling performers on the set and the kind of acting problems and solutions they have encountered. The interviews include, among performers, Lindsay Crouse, Tommy Lee Jones, Christine Lahti, Richard Dreyfuss, John Lithgow, Lee Grant, and Eli Wallach, and, among directors, Sidney Pollack, Bob Rafelson, Karel Reisz, Lawrence Kasdan, and John Sayles. Sidney Lumet, a great director of actors, is conspicuous by his absence, especially since several of the performers interviewed discuss him with reverence.

The interviews include much interesting personal detail about how the performers or directors approach their screen work, and several fascinating issues emerge, including the value of rehearsal and directors' attitudes toward actors. While many of the actors value rehearsal, the directors are wary of overrehearsing scenes, believing that it tends to flatten and deenergize the performances. Richard Dreyfuss maintains that film directors no longer know anything about film acting, and Lawrence Kasdan (a fine director of actors) believes that, in general, directors don't like actors and are afraid of their demands for rehearsal and for analysis of a role. If Dreyfuss and Kasdan are correct, the attitudes they describe help account for one of the more dispiriting features of contemporary American films—that they too often feature brilliant visual design with minimal emphasis on subtleties of performance and dialogue.

A skillful interviewer, Zucker is exceptionally knowledgable about the intricacies of each artist's career and work. She can thus engage her subjects in a meaningful dialogue about the details of their work, often focusing on the small, but telling, aspects of a scene or film. Her subjects seem appreciative of this close attention and often respond with long and generous replies.

Book-length compilations of interviews tend to produce a fragmented effect because, collectively, the personalities expressing themselves are so diverse and the responses tend to move in many different directions. While these interviews make for compelling reading, the book would have benefited from a substantial chapter summarizing and analysing the different issues and controversies that run through the discussions. As it stands now, the conclusion is brief and unnecessarily florid. It doesn't help much to learn that "it is the actor's task to go into the night of the soul and return intact, to show people that the journey can be made," or that "film actors are the shamans of our culture."

Despite this minor limitation, *Figures of Light* offers an illuminating portrait of contemporary film acting, and, best of all, the interviews are a lot of fun to read.

STEPHEN PRINCE

■ Stephen Prince is the Book Review Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky

A Visual Fugue

By Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994. $47.50 cloth; $24.95 paper.

The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue represents a welcomed revisionist attempt to balance the heretofore dominant view of Tarkovsky—encouraged first and foremost by the director himself—that he was a persecuted martyr victimized by small-minded and still smaller-spirited ideologues and philistines. Authors Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie point out many facts to the contrary: the careers of many Soviet directors sustained far more damage than his; he always had defenders within Goskino; his career never came to a standstill; and all his films were ultimately released. They also favor the view that his small output was more a function of his temperament as an artist than of any obstacles presented by the Soviet film bureaucracy. Indeed, Johnson and Petrie find it hard to imagine the director's full evolution as an artist within a mode of production less insulated from the marketplace. As detailed in their book, Tarkovsky's move West was far from the liberating experience he had naïvely imagined.

Johnson and Petrie portray a Soviet film industry perpetually polarized on the subject of Tarkovsky. In the hands of his enemies, the director's international awards only confirmed charges made in the Soviet press as early as his diploma film—that he drew too heavily on European cinema as a model. On the other hand, the same

Western honors, combined with Tarkovsky's stubborn intransigence, galvanized sympathetic forces within Goskino at least reservedly drawn to concurrent developments in world cinema. Johnson and Petrie suggest that in fashioning his self-image out of a deeply rooted Russian version of the Romantic martyr/artist, Tarkovsky—and ultimately his champions—exaggerated his outsider status. While this demythologizing of Tarkovsky's position as victim is refreshing, the authors' use of Tarkovsky's triumphs to dismiss the significance of the forces arrayed against him seems less than fair, particularly when one considers the deep shadows cast by the horrible precedents of Soviet cultural repression.

The book's exploration of Tarkovsky's theoretical writings are very revealing of the manner in which the director cultivated his position as defiant outsider. However, this point becomes obscured by Johnson and Petrie's defensive remarks about the unfashionable nature of Tarkovsky's Romantic aesthetics when placed against contemporary theory premised on the "death of the author." To ask that authors sign onto a project that amounts to renouncing their own centrality in the creative process seems unreasonable to the point of absurdity. The real significance of Tarkovsky's writings is not that they are embarrassingly "archaic" when measured against contemporary Western film theory, but that they are pointedly "reactionary" in the context of Marxist-Soviet aesthetic criticism. By choosing to build his speculations around the notion of the artist as cultural "aristocrat" rather than its socialist boilerplate equivalent, "vanguard," Tarkovsky seized on a metaphor apparently designed to bait rather than genuflect before the Soviet Union's cultural guardians. This "counter-revolutionary" resuscitation of apparently discarded and discredited models links Tarkovsky to such famous resisters of Marxist-Soviet orthodoxy as Solzhenitsyn, and underscores the degree to which the director represented nothing less than an intentional poke in the eye to Soviet ideologues.

In light of Johnson and Petrie's acknowledgment of the importance of Tarkovsky's veneration by the West in advancing his Soviet career, it is surprising that the most underdeveloped aspect of the book is its contextualization of Tarkovsky within European art film-making. The authors are overly concerned with establishing the uniqueness of Tarkovsky's aesthetic vision, referring all discussion of influences to Tarkovsky's own potentially self-serving writings on the subject, which they invariably accept at face value. The fact that Tarkovsky loathed *2001: A Space Odyssey* hardly closes off discussion of the relationship between Kubrick's film and *Solaris,* any more than the fact that the director was unimpressed with a pair of lesser Janscó films from the 1980s means that the Hungarian's more widely hailed titles from the 1960s had no impact on the development of the Russian's own long-take aesthetic.

Calling "what Tarkovsky actually learned from" admitted heroes Bergman and Bresson "problematic" is nothing short of astonishing. A short list of the parallels between Bresson and Tarkovsky's use of sound alone would include the expressively flattened delivery of their actors, their general diminishing of the role of dialogue, their selective highlighting of ambient noises, their extensive interest in the evocative possibilities of offscreen sound, and their careful use of nondiegetic music for poetic/religious/mystical ends. Similarly, even without its obvious "quote" of the famous shot from *Persona* joining the faces of Liv Ullman and Bibi Andersson, *The Sacrifice* is as guilty of the charge of being ersatz Bergman as any film of Woody Allen. The fact that it simultaneously fits comfortably within Tarkovsky's own oeuvre only forces us to reexamine the rest of the Russian's films and ask such questions as to what degree the presentation of the wandering spiritual journey of Andrei Roublev was directly drawn from the quest of von Sydow's knight in *The Seventh Seal.*

The book is divided into three sections. The first deals primarily with background on the Soviet film industry, biographical material, Tarkovsky's own writings on film, and details about his working methods. The second consists of critical analyses of individual titles, excluding Tarkovsky's first two collaborative works (which the authors do not seem to have seen), but including his diploma film, *The Steamroller and the Violin* (1960). The final third is devoted to four separate critical essays discussing patterns across all of the films on the subjects of film form (the alteration of color, monochromatic and/or selectively desaturated film stock, the attention to rhythms in sound editing, the long take); recycled imagery (water, trees, horses, mirrors); thematic preoccupations (misshapen family relationships, the interrelationship of dreams and reality, the heroic quest); and the self-reflexive theme of art and the artist.

This arrangement of topics pays off in both comprehensiveness and clarity. Each of the three sections displays admirable strengths and there are certain moments where Johnson and Petrie manage to make points of significant subtlety and nuance with pitch-perfect elegance. At other times, however, they allow minor redundancies to nettle the reader not just across sections but within them.

Among other strengths, the book usefully contrasts the critical reception of the films in the East and West, noting how Western viewers were more likely to read allegorical meaning into films like *Andrei Roublev.* In the pursuit of "biographical information which is in

some way significant for his work," Johnson and Petrie conducted interviews with nearly 50 individuals connected to Tarkovsky. These sources are particularly valuable when illuminating the director's working methods and aesthetic intentions. On the other hand, the book's single biggest drawback is its promiscuous approach to the intermingling of biography and criticism. In part this takes the form of an excessive concern with locating possible biographical antecedents for filmic elements, as if such connections somehow accounted for an element's aesthetic function. This is matched by the reciprocal tendency of allowing features of the films to fill in gaps in our biographical knowledge.

The book's big revelation (the evidence for which is discreetly withheld) is that Tarkovsky was secretly bisexual. The weight stacked on this news shows just how dangerous the whole project of interweaving criticism and biography can become when authors feel unrestrained in their use of the one to make interpretive conjectures about the other. In the space of five sentences (248), Johnson and Petrie move from (1) asserting Tarkovsky's bisexuality, to (2) suggesting that because of the homophobic nature of Russian society, this could have been a "deep, dark evil that tormented him," to (3) suggesting that this deep, dark, tormenting sexual proclivity might have some sort of bearing on why his films present women's sexuality as threatening, to (4) suggesting that—because the exception to the rule of Tarkovsky's negative portrayal of women's sexuality involves a sexually precocious female child—his tormented bisexuality could have included a desire for young (boyish?) girls, to (5) suggesting that because he used his real-life red-haired stepdaughter to portray a sexually precocious red-haired child, we have to add incestuous longings to this possible bisexual-pederastic torment. As the coup de grace, the still dubious are informed (6) that "Tarkovsky's favorite hair color was red." If nothing else, such speculative leaps back and forth between text and biography require of the reader both a high degree of mental ambidexterity and the heartiest of constitutions.

DAVID PRATT

■ David Pratt teaches in the Film Studies Program at Emory University.

The Films of Joseph Losey

By James Palmer and Michael Riley. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. $13.95.

Inasmuch as I admire the films of Joseph Losey a great deal (he seems to me to be one of the foremost arbiters of 1960s British cinematic consciousness), I was predisposed to admire this book, and it did not disappoint me. The Cambridge Film Classics series uses a format which takes several key works in a director's ouevre and then extrapolates a theoretical and/or critical model for the rest of that person's output. In Losey's case, detailed discussions of *King and Country, The Servant, Accident, The Go-Between,* and *The Romantic Englishwoman* offer useful keys to the understanding of the rest of Losey's work. Certainly these are some of Losey's most important films, as well as some of the most influential works by any director between the early 1960s and mid-1970s.

Of particular value are the many frame blowups in the work, used to illustrate key moments in the films under examination; these frozen moments from the films are especially useful when analyzing the many sound bridges and repetitions of sound and image in *Accident.* Palmer and Riley obviously admire Losey's films a great deal, yet they note in the beginning of their text that Losey's reputation remains "unjustifiably problematic." Why this should be so seems to me fairly obvious: Losey, more than perhaps any "commercial" director save Jean-Luc Godard, made a number of ambitious and experimental allegories that were often semi-successful (*Boom!* and *Secret Ceremony* [both 1968] come immediately to mind), and Losey's sheer level of output worked against a fuller appreciation of his films as a coherent body of work.

In his most accomplished films, such as *The Servant* and *Accident,* Losey distills an evocation of a certain time and place, a set of values in collapse, a world stillborn yet simultaneously real and enticing to the viewer. The complexity of Losey's films also encourages repeated viewings, and as Palmer and Riley's text makes clear, the graceful arabesques of Losey's camera (combined, on many occasions, with the epigrammatic dialogue of Harold Pinter) combine to transport the viewer into the world Losey's characters inhabit, a world sinuously attractive even as it remains a zone of memory and unease.

Dirk Bogarde is in every way the ideal Losey protagonist of the 1960s; his combination of weakness and resolve is ideally suited to the roles of the conniving servant in *The Servant* and the repressed Oxford don in *Accident.* As Palmer and Riley's discussion of *Accident*

some way significant for his work," Johnson and Petrie conducted interviews with nearly 50 individuals connected to Tarkovsky. These sources are particularly valuable when illuminating the director's working methods and aesthetic intentions. On the other hand, the book's single biggest drawback is its promiscuous approach to the intermingling of biography and criticism. In part this takes the form of an excessive concern with locating possible biographical antecedents for filmic elements, as if such connections somehow accounted for an element's aesthetic function. This is matched by the reciprocal tendency of allowing features of the films to fill in gaps in our biographical knowledge.

The book's big revelation (the evidence for which is discreetly withheld) is that Tarkovsky was secretly bisexual. The weight stacked on this news shows just how dangerous the whole project of interweaving criticism and biography can become when authors feel unrestrained in their use of the one to make interpretive conjectures about the other. In the space of five sentences (248), Johnson and Petrie move from (1) asserting Tarkovsky's bisexuality, to (2) suggesting that because of the homophobic nature of Russian society, this could have been a "deep, dark evil that tormented him," to (3) suggesting that this deep, dark, tormenting sexual proclivity might have some sort of bearing on why his films present women's sexuality as threatening, to (4) suggesting that—because the exception to the rule of Tarkovsky's negative portrayal of women's sexuality involves a sexually precocious female child—his tormented bisexuality could have included a desire for young (boyish?) girls, to (5) suggesting that because he used his real-life red-haired stepdaughter to portray a sexually precocious red-haired child, we have to add incestuous longings to this possible bisexual-pederastic torment. As the coup de grace, the still dubious are informed (6) that "Tarkovsky's favorite hair color was red." If nothing else, such speculative leaps back and forth between text and biography require of the reader both a high degree of mental ambidexterity and the heartiest of constitutions.

DAVID PRATT

■ David Pratt teaches in the Film Studies Program at Emory University.

The Films of Joseph Losey

By James Palmer and Michael Riley. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. $13.95.

Inasmuch as I admire the films of Joseph Losey a great deal (he seems to me to be one of the foremost arbiters of 1960s British cinematic consciousness), I was predisposed to admire this book, and it did not disappoint me. The Cambridge Film Classics series uses a format which takes several key works in a director's ouevre and then extrapolates a theoretical and/or critical model for the rest of that person's output. In Losey's case, detailed discussions of *King and Country, The Servant, Accident, The Go-Between,* and *The Romantic Englishwoman* offer useful keys to the understanding of the rest of Losey's work. Certainly these are some of Losey's most important films, as well as some of the most influential works by any director between the early 1960s and mid-1970s.

Of particular value are the many frame blowups in the work, used to illustrate key moments in the films under examination; these frozen moments from the films are especially useful when analyzing the many sound bridges and repetitions of sound and image in *Accident.* Palmer and Riley obviously admire Losey's films a great deal, yet they note in the beginning of their text that Losey's reputation remains "unjustifiably problematic." Why this should be so seems to me fairly obvious: Losey, more than perhaps any "commercial" director save Jean-Luc Godard, made a number of ambitious and experimental allegories that were often semi-successful (*Boom!* and *Secret Ceremony* [both 1968] come immediately to mind), and Losey's sheer level of output worked against a fuller appreciation of his films as a coherent body of work.

In his most accomplished films, such as *The Servant* and *Accident,* Losey distills an evocation of a certain time and place, a set of values in collapse, a world stillborn yet simultaneously real and enticing to the viewer. The complexity of Losey's films also encourages repeated viewings, and as Palmer and Riley's text makes clear, the graceful arabesques of Losey's camera (combined, on many occasions, with the epigrammatic dialogue of Harold Pinter) combine to transport the viewer into the world Losey's characters inhabit, a world sinuously attractive even as it remains a zone of memory and unease.

Dirk Bogarde is in every way the ideal Losey protagonist of the 1960s; his combination of weakness and resolve is ideally suited to the roles of the conniving servant in *The Servant* and the repressed Oxford don in *Accident.* As Palmer and Riley's discussion of *Accident*

makes clear, the film's easy slippage back and forth in narrative time and incident effortlessly evokes a sense of the eternal, the endlessly memorable, while simultaneously acknowledging the ephemerality of the human condition. Concomitantly, Losey's restless and peering camera in *The Servant* transforms James Fox's luxury flat into a white-walled prison of desire in which every meeting is a potential assignation and every unspoken wish ultimately manifests itself in the film's final and decadently inviting images of societal rupture.

While Losey continued on into the 1980s with such films as *La Truite* (1982) and *Steaming* (1985; Losey's last work), Palmer and Riley argue elegantly that Losey never really transcended the work he did in Britain in the 60s and early 70s; that indeed, Losey was ideally suited to the role of expatriate film director (as one may recall, Losey's career began in the U.S. with such films as *The Boy with the Green Hair* [1948], before the director fled the United States in 1951 as a result of the attention focussed on him by the House Un-American Activities Committee). The experience of being "a man without a country" influenced Losey deeply, and in all of his subsequent works he never lost a feeling of general distrust toward the members of the ruling hierarchy.

Settling in England, Losey made his first film with Bogarde in 1954 (*The Sleeping Tiger*) and then went on to an interesting collaboration with the legendary British production unit Hammer films, including the rarely seen short film *A Man on the Beach* (1955) and then his masterwork, *The Damned* (1963). This film, in which the members of a corrupt scientific community conspire to keep a group of radioactive children separated from the public at large, is one that I would have selected as one of Losey's key works for discussion. This small caveat notwithstanding, *The Films of Joseph Losey* is an excellent book, well written, carefully researched, and offering to the student and the casual reader alike a one-volume overview of Losey's life and work.

WHEELER WINSTON DIXON

■ Wheeler Winston Dixon is Chairperson of the Film Studies Program, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

The Graham Greene Film Reader

Reviews, Essays, Interviews & Film Stories

Edited by David Parkinson. New York: Applause Books, 1995. $35.00.

As both novelist and scenarist, Graham Greene made an unequalled contribution to cinema as an art form, and it is highly gratifying to see the publication of his collected film criticism. Dismissed by eminent literary critics in his time, Greene still awaits appropriate recognition. This comprehensive compilation of his film criticism, various essays, book reviews, and film treatments is a good beginning.

Graham Greene grew up in the formative years of world cinema, and his fiction-writing technique owed much to it. The author and critic wanted cinema to live up to its real potentials of being a mass art form, comparable to the Elizabethan theater, aiming at poetic and visually aesthetic expression. His vision is yet to be achieved.

The developing novelist ruthlessly, and often sarcastically, criticized any film failing to realize the true potentials of cinema. Reviewing Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* (1935), Greene championed a cinema utterly opposed to Mayer's MGM and artificial stars such as Merle Oberon: "Perfection is not a word one cares to use, but from the opening sequence of the Ceylon forest, the great revolving fans of palm which fill the screen, this film moves with the air of absolute certainty in its object and assurance in its method" (33).

Greene had a disdain for dialogue based on his suspicion of American cinema. As he wrote in a 1928 *Times* review, "The object of the film should be the translation of thought back into images. America has made the mistake of translating it into action" (388–89). Greene championed the flexible use of silent (Soviet) cinema's key techniques. "Films must also allow for the non-vital moments. Montage is often very close to melodrama: the objection to many of the very intelligent films of the GPO Film unit is that they substitute a sense of the dramatic for the sense of the ordinary routine occupations they describe" (486). Similarly, he had no objection to color as long as it was properly used. Reviewing *Becky Sharp* (1935), he criticized the artificial uses of the new Technicolor process. "If colour is to be of permanent importance a way must be found to use it realistically, not only as a beautiful decoration.... I can't help remembering how bright and new were all the dresses in *Becky Sharp*. Can Technicolor reproduce with the necessary accuracy the suit that has been worn too long, the oily hat?" (10).

makes clear, the film's easy slippage back and forth in narrative time and incident effortlessly evokes a sense of the eternal, the endlessly memorable, while simultaneously acknowledging the ephemerality of the human condition. Concomitantly, Losey's restless and peering camera in *The Servant* transforms James Fox's luxury flat into a white-walled prison of desire in which every meeting is a potential assignation and every unspoken wish ultimately manifests itself in the film's final and decadently inviting images of societal rupture.

While Losey continued on into the 1980s with such films as *La Truite* (1982) and *Steaming* (1985; Losey's last work), Palmer and Riley argue elegantly that Losey never really transcended the work he did in Britain in the 60s and early 70s; that indeed, Losey was ideally suited to the role of expatriate film director (as one may recall, Losey's career began in the U.S. with such films as *The Boy with the Green Hair* [1948], before the director fled the United States in 1951 as a result of the attention focussed on him by the House Un-American Activities Committee). The experience of being "a man without a country" influenced Losey deeply, and in all of his subsequent works he never lost a feeling of general distrust toward the members of the ruling hierarchy.

Settling in England, Losey made his first film with Bogarde in 1954 (*The Sleeping Tiger*) and then went on to an interesting collaboration with the legendary British production unit Hammer films, including the rarely seen short film *A Man on the Beach* (1955) and then his masterwork, *The Damned* (1963). This film, in which the members of a corrupt scientific community conspire to keep a group of radioactive children separated from the public at large, is one that I would have selected as one of Losey's key works for discussion. This small caveat notwithstanding, *The Films of Joseph Losey* is an excellent book, well written, carefully researched, and offering to the student and the casual reader alike a one-volume overview of Losey's life and work.

WHEELER WINSTON DIXON

■ Wheeler Winston Dixon is Chairperson of the Film Studies Program, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

The Graham Greene Film Reader

Reviews, Essays, Interviews & Film Stories

Edited by David Parkinson. New York: Applause Books, 1995. $35.00.

As both novelist and scenarist, Graham Greene made an unequalled contribution to cinema as an art form, and it is highly gratifying to see the publication of his collected film criticism. Dismissed by eminent literary critics in his time, Greene still awaits appropriate recognition. This comprehensive compilation of his film criticism, various essays, book reviews, and film treatments is a good beginning.

Graham Greene grew up in the formative years of world cinema, and his fiction-writing technique owed much to it. The author and critic wanted cinema to live up to its real potentials of being a mass art form, comparable to the Elizabethan theater, aiming at poetic and visually aesthetic expression. His vision is yet to be achieved.

The developing novelist ruthlessly, and often sarcastically, criticized any film failing to realize the true potentials of cinema. Reviewing Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* (1935), Greene championed a cinema utterly opposed to Mayer's MGM and artificial stars such as Merle Oberon: "Perfection is not a word one cares to use, but from the opening sequence of the Ceylon forest, the great revolving fans of palm which fill the screen, this film moves with the air of absolute certainty in its object and assurance in its method" (33).

Greene had a disdain for dialogue based on his suspicion of American cinema. As he wrote in a 1928 *Times* review, "The object of the film should be the translation of thought back into images. America has made the mistake of translating it into action" (388–89). Greene championed the flexible use of silent (Soviet) cinema's key techniques. "Films must also allow for the non-vital moments. Montage is often very close to melodrama: the objection to many of the very intelligent films of the GPO Film unit is that they substitute a sense of the dramatic for the sense of the ordinary routine occupations they describe" (486). Similarly, he had no objection to color as long as it was properly used. Reviewing *Becky Sharp* (1935), he criticized the artificial uses of the new Technicolor process. "If colour is to be of permanent importance a way must be found to use it realistically, not only as a beautiful decoration.... I can't help remembering how bright and new were all the dresses in *Becky Sharp*. Can Technicolor reproduce with the necessary accuracy the suit that has been worn too long, the oily hat?" (10).

Greene also had particular standards he applied to directors, standards involving the creative treatment of verisimilitude. While dismissing Alfred Hitchcock as a master, not of suspense, but of cinematic tricks and caricature (a judgment made in 1936 and never modified), he praised Fritz Lang for his treatment of the lynch scene and direction of Spencer Tracy and Sylvia Sydney as the doomed lovers in *Fury* (1936).

The most amusing parts of this collection involve Greene's frequent criticism of actors and actresses whose performances are highly inappropriate to cinema. The British actor Herbert Marshall "has the damp muzzle of a healthy British dog," while Emil Jannings "has the meaningless gaze of a sea-lion" (201). He recognizes Garbo's abilities, but also recognizes the flawed vehicles Hollywood provided for her, such as *Marie Walewska* (1937). "A great actress—oh, undoubtedly, one wearily assents, but what dull pompous films they make for her, the slow consummation of her noble adulteries" (246). Grace Moore fares much worse. Viewing her in Abel Gance's *Louise* (1939), Greene grimaces, "Oh, the tiptoeings of Miss Moore, the sedate coquetry, the little trills and carollings, and the great stony teeth" (302).

The real highlight of this book is the publication of the notorious *Night and Day* review that led MGM to bring a libel suit against Greene on Shirley Temple's behalf. Reviewing *Captain January* (1936), he noted that "some of her popularity seems to rest on a coquetry quite as mature as Miss Colbert's and on an oddly precocious body as voluptuous in grey flannel trousers as Miss Dietrich's" (128).

Greene was a perceptive and honest reviewer ceaselessly championing the highest goals of cinema and contributing to some of its most interesting achievements. This collection is essential reading for any course seriously examining interactions between film and literature.

TONY WILLIAMS

■ Tony Williams teaches in the English Department of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Hitchcock on Hitchcock

Selected Writings and Interviews

Edited by Sidney Gottlieb. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995. $29.95.

Hitchcock on Hitchcock is a high-concept book so commercial you can't believe no one has thought of it before: a selection of writings and interviews—reminiscences, production histories, comments on working with actors, and favorite film-making techniques—by the most publicity-conscious auteur in the pantheon. Thank Sidney Gottlieb for coming up with it. I must admit, however, I was cynical about this project. It is part of a publishing trend that finds larger sales in books by directors than in books by critics and historians. But Gottlieb's introduction makes a persuasive case for why this volume is not only helpful, but in many ways invaluable. Rephrasing Robin Wood's famous question as "Why should we take Hitchcock's writings seriously?", Gottlieb advises readers to view the articles here not as definitive statements of author's intent "but as parts of the tale, meant, like the films, to be sensitively and thoughtfully experienced, interpreted, interrogated, and appreciated" (xiii). Gottlieb anticipates our circumspect objections by posing and answering three questions about them.

First, did Hitchcock actually write these pieces? Mostly yes, in the sense that "Hitchcock in one way or another guided, supervised, reviewed, and/or approved the final copy before it went to press" (here Gottlieb refers to limited but compelling examples in the Hitchcock papers for support). Second, since the articles were part of a publicity barrage, are they useless? No. Astounded as we might be at Robert Kapsis's revelations (in *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation*) of how carefully Hitchcock managed his public image (including a considered threat to sue Francois Truffaut if *Hitchcock/Truffaut* turned out badly), and cynical as the pieces are in function, they do have substance as "thoughtful meditations on film art in general and attempts to define and refine his own art in particular." Hitchcock wants to prepare his audience to appreciate certain things as his films go into release, but, Gottlieb insists, Hitchcock also wants to "educate" them. One cannot conclude the collection—let alone passages such as, "When you have seen pitched battles on the screen, did you have any idea how they were made? Come behind the scenes with me, and I'll tell you" (42)—without agreeing that Hitchcock is like the magician who reveals the trick, one who demonstrates "his irrepressible delight in his work" (3). His eagerness to describe how he directs actors, how he constructs a narrative or an adaptation, how he shot the intricacies of *Rope* (1948), how travelling mattes work in *The Birds* (1963), how color and lighting were controlled in *Torn Curtain* (1968)—all show us that Hitchcock was extremely articulate about the many conscious considerations that went into his film-making technique.

Gottlieb finally questions what the articles collected

Greene also had particular standards he applied to directors, standards involving the creative treatment of verisimilitude. While dismissing Alfred Hitchcock as a master, not of suspense, but of cinematic tricks and caricature (a judgment made in 1936 and never modified), he praised Fritz Lang for his treatment of the lynch scene and direction of Spencer Tracy and Sylvia Sydney as the doomed lovers in *Fury* (1936).

The most amusing parts of this collection involve Greene's frequent criticism of actors and actresses whose performances are highly inappropriate to cinema. The British actor Herbert Marshall "has the damp muzzle of a healthy British dog," while Emil Jannings "has the meaningless gaze of a sea-lion" (201). He recognizes Garbo's abilities, but also recognizes the flawed vehicles Hollywood provided for her, such as *Marie Walewska* (1937). "A great actress—oh, undoubtedly, one wearily assents, but what dull pompous films they make for her, the slow consummation of her noble adulteries" (246). Grace Moore fares much worse. Viewing her in Abel Gance's *Louise* (1939), Greene grimaces, "Oh, the tiptoeings of Miss Moore, the sedate coquetry, the little trills and carollings, and the great stony teeth" (302).

The real highlight of this book is the publication of the notorious *Night and Day* review that led MGM to bring a libel suit against Greene on Shirley Temple's behalf. Reviewing *Captain January* (1936), he noted that "some of her popularity seems to rest on a coquetry quite as mature as Miss Colbert's and on an oddly precocious body as voluptuous in grey flannel trousers as Miss Dietrich's" (128).

Greene was a perceptive and honest reviewer ceaselessly championing the highest goals of cinema and contributing to some of its most interesting achievements. This collection is essential reading for any course seriously examining interactions between film and literature.

TONY WILLIAMS

■ Tony Williams teaches in the English Department of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Hitchcock on Hitchcock

Selected Writings and Interviews

Edited by Sidney Gottlieb. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995. $29.95.

Hitchcock on Hitchcock is a high-concept book so commercial you can't believe no one has thought of it before: a selection of writings and interviews—reminiscences, production histories, comments on working with actors, and favorite film-making techniques—by the most publicity-conscious auteur in the pantheon. Thank Sidney Gottlieb for coming up with it. I must admit, however, I was cynical about this project. It is part of a publishing trend that finds larger sales in books by directors than in books by critics and historians. But Gottlieb's introduction makes a persuasive case for why this volume is not only helpful, but in many ways invaluable. Rephrasing Robin Wood's famous question as "Why should we take Hitchcock's writings seriously?", Gottlieb advises readers to view the articles here not as definitive statements of author's intent "but as parts of the tale, meant, like the films, to be sensitively and thoughtfully experienced, interpreted, interrogated, and appreciated" (xiii). Gottlieb anticipates our circumspect objections by posing and answering three questions about them.

First, did Hitchcock actually write these pieces? Mostly yes, in the sense that "Hitchcock in one way or another guided, supervised, reviewed, and/or approved the final copy before it went to press" (here Gottlieb refers to limited but compelling examples in the Hitchcock papers for support). Second, since the articles were part of a publicity barrage, are they useless? No. Astounded as we might be at Robert Kapsis's revelations (in *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation*) of how carefully Hitchcock managed his public image (including a considered threat to sue Francois Truffaut if *Hitchcock/Truffaut* turned out badly), and cynical as the pieces are in function, they do have substance as "thoughtful meditations on film art in general and attempts to define and refine his own art in particular." Hitchcock wants to prepare his audience to appreciate certain things as his films go into release, but, Gottlieb insists, Hitchcock also wants to "educate" them. One cannot conclude the collection—let alone passages such as, "When you have seen pitched battles on the screen, did you have any idea how they were made? Come behind the scenes with me, and I'll tell you" (42)—without agreeing that Hitchcock is like the magician who reveals the trick, one who demonstrates "his irrepressible delight in his work" (3). His eagerness to describe how he directs actors, how he constructs a narrative or an adaptation, how he shot the intricacies of *Rope* (1948), how travelling mattes work in *The Birds* (1963), how color and lighting were controlled in *Torn Curtain* (1968)—all show us that Hitchcock was extremely articulate about the many conscious considerations that went into his film-making technique.

Gottlieb finally questions what the articles collected

here tell us that we don't already know about the master of suspense, particularly from *Hitchcock/Truffaut*. I agreed with him that unlike the Truffaut interviews, these pieces show us Hitchcock's ideas at a time closer to the actual making of the films than the well-honed anecdotes he constantly repeated. They also manifest the self-contradictions or simple changes of mind inevitable over such a long career in the public eye: at different points he claimed both that he had no interest in directing while working in the studios prior to *The Pleasure Garden* (1927) and that he had always dreamed of making *The 39 Steps* (1935); he claims that actors are cattle and then denies it; he tells a British readership in the 1930s that he wants to make social consciousness movies but censors prevent him, but also admits to an American psychologist in 1963 that "I belong to fictions."

Gottlieb has arranged the essays in chronological order within five general categories: autobiographical musings; comments on actors and stars; on suspense and the audience; on the institutional aspects of studio production (working with production executives, censors, genre expectations, the confined role of the director); and on specific elements of style (the last two parts being the longest). Gottlieb insightfully introduces each section and specifies what he found of interest in the essays, relating them to biographies and critical bromides about the films.

One finds many old sawhorses here: the contrasts of surprise and suspense; the importance of restraint and elegance in a heroine to keep a man intrigued; the 1963 assertion that "I play [the audience] like an organ"; the 1965 joke about still reading David O. Selznick's 1939 memo; the remark that television puts murder where it belongs, in the home; and the repeated assertion that his films must be commercially successful.

Yet there are many surprises here, as well—Hitchcock's keen interest in European avant-garde filmmaking of the 20s and 30s, which he recognized was beyond the commercial constraints he faced; the fact that Madeleine Carroll's presence and improvisations on the set built up her role in *The 39 Steps*; that Hitchcock was tagged a mysogynist director as early as 1935; and his reflection in 1950 that "Today, however, there is nothing very glamorous about spying—there is only one sort of secret to be stolen and there is too much at stake for people to play charades over it." Collaborators have commented on how loath Hitchcock was to share credit for his successes, but here he is thanking Michael Balcon, his writers and stars, and the many technicians on *Rope* for their contributions.

Different readers will find different things of value in this volume. The importance of humor in Hitchcock's work is one that stood out to me. The director constantly discusses the importance of a laugh for purposes of contrast with tension and suspense. I was also struck by Hitchcock's perceptiveness as a Hollywood observer—his appreciation for Claudette Colbert as "one of the loveliest women in American films," for Carole Lombard as a natural actress, for William Powell as the best performer for a comedy-thriller (a proto-Cary Grant), and his prediction in 1938 that Humphrey Bogart would soon go the way of Powell, from charismatic villain to leading man.

A third pleasure I found in this volume was to see Hitchcock's conceptual affinities with Russian filmmakers demonstrated yet again in his own words. His desire to "shake up" the audience like a roller-coaster ride before viewers become too "sluggish and jellified" in their civilized, sheltered routine suggested to me the Russian formalist notion of refreshening our perceptions. Like Lev Kuleshov, he claims that for him content is secondary to matters of style, and that combinations of shots create ideas, but "Any individual piece [of film] is nothing." His description of the physiological effects of film-making sounds like a medicine-show barker—"Such scenes, which set the blood pounding through the veins, are highly beneficial for indigestion, gout rheumatism, sciatica, and premature middle age"—but also hold much in common with Sergei Eisenstein's montage of attractions.

Related to Hitchcock's interest in visceral effects is the evidence here of Hitchcock's class consciousness, which, significantly enough, often emerges in his discussion of British actresses. He can generalize to assert that "the higher you run your finger up the British social scale, the faster the drama dies. . . . The upper classes are too 'bottled up' to be of any use as colorful screen matter, too stiffened with breeding to relax into the natural easiness of normality required by the screen." There's no cure for gout here, and this dismissal of the British aristocracy is part of Hitchcock's critique of British films; but it is also part of Hitchcock's disdain for British actresses, whose training on the stage or in life, he claims, makes it "always their desire to appear a lady and, in doing so, they become cold and lifeless. Nothing pleases me more than to knock the ladylikeness out of chorus girls!"—a process he seems to have accomplished by dragging Madeleine Carroll through the mud in *The 39 Steps*. Given the many insights feminist analyses have provided into his films, it is fascinating to see Hitchcock rationalize his conceptions of gender and actresses in terms of class.

I had very, very few quibbles with the selection here. I could find only one historical error, and only at one point did I wish the author had helped the reader more. In short, Gottlieb has taken impressive care with the mate-

rial—and with his invaluable book has made readily available a set of writings that open up a whole new perspective on this complex and compelling director.

MATTHEW BERNSTEIN

■ Matthew Bernstein was a research assistant to Donald Spoto on *The Dark Side of Genius*.

Like a Film

Ideological Fantasy on Screen, Camera and Canvas

By Timothy Murray. New York: Routledge, 1993. $17.95.

Timothy Murray's new book is not for the fainthearted. The principal matrix is psychoanalysis, in both its Freudian and Lacanian varieties, but its swirl of theory takes us through such redoubtable thinkers as Jean-François Lyotard, Slavoj Žižek, Louis Marin, and Jacques Derrida, with many other stops in between. Somewhat narcissistically, Murray likes keeping as many balls in the air as possible, but the most frustrating thing is that he seems to assume that his readers have read exactly everything that he has, and as recently. He is therefore parsimonious with explanations of key terms such as Lyotard's "differend," Guy Rosolato's "perspectival object," Lee Edelman's "homographesis," and so on. And sentences like this one, about Derek Jarman's film *Caravaggio*, abound: "This is not to say, however, that the shining coins finally covering Caravaggio's dead eyes fail to signify the orderly, metaphyscial economy of the supplement which reinscribes the mess of anamnesis in the framework of analytic certitude." (Knowing the context of this quotation does not make things any easier.) But while there's little *jouissance* in Murray's prose, and the going is often rough, he gives us plenty to think about.

Like a Film is a collection of essays on film, photography, and conceptual art that is more or less held together by a welcome desire to focus philosophical attention away from literary texts onto visual texts and performance/conceptual art. Murray relies principally on Žižek's concept of "ideological fantasy," which stresses the function of ideology as a fantasy construction that helps us to support a certain sense of "reality" rather than an illusion that helps us to escape it. The inevitable differentials of power that exist in varying subject positions within this ideological fantasy are profitably explored through Lyotard's notion of the "differend," a name that describes those settlements of conflicts which are conceptualized in the idiom of only one of the parties. Ultimately, Murray's laudable political goal is to "forge methods of opening particular cultural domains, sexualities, or races to something verging on a reciprocal reflection on ideological fantasy."

His methodology is itself a bracing—if sometimes confusing—postmodern one of provocative juxtaposition rather than sustained linear argument. He first takes up the Yvonne Rainer film *Journeys from Berlin/1971*, deriving from it interesting new ways to think about the relation between cinema and psychoanalysis, given "the wide shadow cast by the Phallus," especially for the female film spectator. He uses the Rainer film "like rear and side projections," while concentrating on critiquing Kaja Silverman's reading of female penis envy in favor of that offered by French psychoanalyst Mario Torok. The question of female incorporation and its relation to melancholy figures importantly here and in the rest of the book.

Another wide-ranging chapter discusses Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* and tries to understand the poignant sense of mourning filling that profound book. A discussion of the depiction of hair in artists Clouet and Titian and photographer Mapplethorpe raises the question of the fetish in Barthes; Kristeva's idea of abjection is thrown in for good measure.

Next comes a short but fascinating discussion of a still photograph from Olivier's *Othello*, in which Olivier's black makeup is clearly seen to have come off on the face of Desdemona, played by Maggie Smith. Attacking theater critic John Simon for the not-so-covert racism he expresses in describing this film, Murray claims that these "darkened stains read as material traces of nothing less than the Eurocentric horror of miscegenation, a horror often glossed by critical overinvestment in the humanist theme of the enigma of moral darkness." Brushing aside Olivier's professed desire to look at things "from a black man's world" in this film, Murray convincingly insists that Olivier's performance does nothing to critique the cultural ideology of negritude. His larger claim about film stills in general is that because they dissolve cinematic time, they stand "alongside the film in a palimpsest relation, like that of the *punctum* to the *studium*, to foreground the constraints of logico-temporal order and the decaying baggage of subjection."

The longest chapter of Murray's book is concerned with Jarman's *Caravaggio*. This chapter is so dense and convoluted (and brilliant) as to be virtually impossible to paraphrase, though one of its chief functions is to distinguish a necessarily phallocentric, misogynist "homosociality" from the writing of homosexuality it-

rial—and with his invaluable book has made readily available a set of writings that open up a whole new perspective on this complex and compelling director.

MATTHEW BERNSTEIN

■ Matthew Bernstein was a research assistant to Donald Spoto on *The Dark Side of Genius*.

Like a Film

Ideological Fantasy on Screen, Camera and Canvas

By Timothy Murray. New York: Routledge, 1993. $17.95.

Timothy Murray's new book is not for the fainthearted. The principal matrix is psychoanalysis, in both its Freudian and Lacanian varieties, but its swirl of theory takes us through such redoubtable thinkers as Jean-François Lyotard, Slavoj Žižek, Louis Marin, and Jacques Derrida, with many other stops in between. Somewhat narcissistically, Murray likes keeping as many balls in the air as possible, but the most frustrating thing is that he seems to assume that his readers have read exactly everything that he has, and as recently. He is therefore parsimonious with explanations of key terms such as Lyotard's "differend," Guy Rosolato's "perspectival object," Lee Edelman's "homographesis," and so on. And sentences like this one, about Derek Jarman's film *Caravaggio*, abound: "This is not to say, however, that the shining coins finally covering Caravaggio's dead eyes fail to signify the orderly, metaphyscial economy of the supplement which reinscribes the mess of anamnesis in the framework of analytic certitude." (Knowing the context of this quotation does not make things any easier.) But while there's little *jouissance* in Murray's prose, and the going is often rough, he gives us plenty to think about.

Like a Film is a collection of essays on film, photography, and conceptual art that is more or less held together by a welcome desire to focus philosophical attention away from literary texts onto visual texts and performance/conceptual art. Murray relies principally on Žižek's concept of "ideological fantasy," which stresses the function of ideology as a fantasy construction that helps us to support a certain sense of "reality" rather than an illusion that helps us to escape it. The inevitable differentials of power that exist in varying subject positions within this ideological fantasy are profitably explored through Lyotard's notion of the "differend," a name that describes those settlements of conflicts which are conceptualized in the idiom of only one of the parties. Ultimately, Murray's laudable political goal is to "forge methods of opening particular cultural domains, sexualities, or races to something verging on a reciprocal reflection on ideological fantasy."

His methodology is itself a bracing—if sometimes confusing—postmodern one of provocative juxtaposition rather than sustained linear argument. He first takes up the Yvonne Rainer film *Journeys from Berlin/1971*, deriving from it interesting new ways to think about the relation between cinema and psychoanalysis, given "the wide shadow cast by the Phallus," especially for the female film spectator. He uses the Rainer film "like rear and side projections," while concentrating on critiquing Kaja Silverman's reading of female penis envy in favor of that offered by French psychoanalyst Mario Torok. The question of female incorporation and its relation to melancholy figures importantly here and in the rest of the book.

Another wide-ranging chapter discusses Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* and tries to understand the poignant sense of mourning filling that profound book. A discussion of the depiction of hair in artists Clouet and Titian and photographer Mapplethorpe raises the question of the fetish in Barthes; Kristeva's idea of abjection is thrown in for good measure.

Next comes a short but fascinating discussion of a still photograph from Olivier's *Othello*, in which Olivier's black makeup is clearly seen to have come off on the face of Desdemona, played by Maggie Smith. Attacking theater critic John Simon for the not-so-covert racism he expresses in describing this film, Murray claims that these "darkened stains read as material traces of nothing less than the Eurocentric horror of miscegenation, a horror often glossed by critical overinvestment in the humanist theme of the enigma of moral darkness." Brushing aside Olivier's professed desire to look at things "from a black man's world" in this film, Murray convincingly insists that Olivier's performance does nothing to critique the cultural ideology of negritude. His larger claim about film stills in general is that because they dissolve cinematic time, they stand "alongside the film in a palimpsest relation, like that of the *punctum* to the *studium*, to foreground the constraints of logico-temporal order and the decaying baggage of subjection."

The longest chapter of Murray's book is concerned with Jarman's *Caravaggio*. This chapter is so dense and convoluted (and brilliant) as to be virtually impossible to paraphrase, though one of its chief functions is to distinguish a necessarily phallocentric, misogynist "homosociality" from the writing of homosexuality it-

self in and on the person of the artist. This chapter closes with a moving homage to homosexual militancy in the age of AIDS. Two more chapters discuss the particularities of Lyotard's intervention in contemporary art and his collaborations with various artists, and the fascinating site sculpture by the artists Helen and Newton Harrison, called *Lagoon Cycle*. The book itself closes with a kind of performative, a politically inflected and refreshingly nontheoretical riff on the idea of the line, put together in various binary oppositions on alternate sides of the page.

PETER BRUNETTE

■ Peter Brunette teaches at George Mason University.

Living Room Lectures

The Fifties Family in Film and Television

By Nina C. Leibman. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995. $45.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

Living Room Lectures is the latest book to focus in detail on one of the most fascinating periods of North American media culture—the 1950s. Following recent work by Christopher Anderson (*Hollywood TV*), William Boddy (*Fifties Television*), Jackie Byars (*All That Hollywood Allows*), and Thomas Doherty (*Teenagers and Teenpics*), the late Nina C. Leibman looks at the representation of the white, suburban, middle-class family in the decade's film and television melodramas. Sampling 89 films and 100 episodes each of "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," "Father Knows Best," "Leave It to Beaver," "The Donna Reed Show," and "My Three Sons," she traces common institutional and ideological configurations between the two industries. The result is a compelling, well-written comparative analysis.

Redefining the television "domestic comedy" as a "family melodrama" so as to bring it more in line with the films, Leibman exposes the family as dysfunctional. Like other good writers on the 1950s, her chosen method is to combine textual with contextual approaches. In the first part of the book, the structural determinants of the industry's material practices are laid out through a productive use of varied sources, including original interviews and letters, a reading of contemporary trade magazines, and archival research. Leibman argues that our popular-historical memory of the period tends to separate the films and television programs as discrete entities, whereas they should be seen as of a piece in their promotion of the domestic melodrama. Such texts were released under the strain of a series of regulatory and consumerist demands, which the author unpacks in painstaking detail.

These assertions are supported by what is described as a "'nearly' close textual analysis" (12) of one of the decade's most popular genres. In practice, this somewhat clumsy label encompasses a mix of "nearly" superb critical readings (e.g., of *Blue Denim* and *A Hatful of Rain*) and sophisticated content analysis. Thematic patterns and stylistic repetitions are organized around questions of family power, gender, and economics, all of which are subjects of long chapters. Leibman convincingly shows that in the 1950s, the "family-protagonist" became the representational center of social life, and illustrates how the "family problem text" (21) resolves its numerous narrative trajectories. One of the book's strongest features is a habitual focus on how textual meaning is generated ideologically. In addition, helpful summaries along the way tidily pull together the main arguments of each chapter.

Leibman is undoubtedly right to claim that the texts share a similar male Oedipal logic, wherein the bonding of father and son is structured to resonate against the exclusion of the mother. The films often have a pivotal "male, adolescent, weepy scene" (137) to bring everything out into the open (*East of Eden*, *From the Terrace*, *Rebel Without a Cause*), whereas the television programs go in for "the talking punishment" (123), with father lecturing the kids while mother shambles around in the background. However, some of the conclusions subsequent to this are a little disappointing.

Perhaps because the case for the radical subversion of the film melodramatic family has been made many times before, Leibman puts forward a novel counterargument, namely that even though 1950s television domesticity represents a repressive, "sanitized familial enclave" (57), shows like "Father Knows Best" are "even more melodramatic than their filmic counterparts" (110). Now, redefining the television text as a domestic melodrama rather than a situation comedy certainly makes critical sense (today, melodrama is a sexier subject of academic analysis), but this is attempted without a satisfying concomitant interrogation of the family unit itself. The author writes in the language of discourse theory—the family is "a regulatory construct" (93), an "Ideological State Apparatus" (150)—and makes a few passing references to President Eisenhower's commission on family life and Dr. Spock's advice book, but she refuses to really engage either with existing historical work on the postwar family in its wider social context (cf. Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound*), or with more

self in and on the person of the artist. This chapter closes with a moving homage to homosexual militancy in the age of AIDS. Two more chapters discuss the particularities of Lyotard's intervention in contemporary art and his collaborations with various artists, and the fascinating site sculpture by the artists Helen and Newton Harrison, called *Lagoon Cycle*. The book itself closes with a kind of performative, a politically inflected and refreshingly nontheoretical riff on the idea of the line, put together in various binary oppositions on alternate sides of the page.

PETER BRUNETTE

■ Peter Brunette teaches at George Mason University.

Living Room Lectures

The Fifties Family in Film and Television

By Nina C. Leibman. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995. $45.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

Living Room Lectures is the latest book to focus in detail on one of the most fascinating periods of North American media culture—the 1950s. Following recent work by Christopher Anderson (*Hollywood TV*), William Boddy (*Fifties Television*), Jackie Byars (*All That Hollywood Allows*), and Thomas Doherty (*Teenagers and Teenpics*), the late Nina C. Leibman looks at the representation of the white, suburban, middle-class family in the decade's film and television melodramas. Sampling 89 films and 100 episodes each of "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," "Father Knows Best," "Leave It to Beaver," "The Donna Reed Show," and "My Three Sons," she traces common institutional and ideological configurations between the two industries. The result is a compelling, well-written comparative analysis.

Redefining the television "domestic comedy" as a "family melodrama" so as to bring it more in line with the films, Leibman exposes the family as dysfunctional. Like other good writers on the 1950s, her chosen method is to combine textual with contextual approaches. In the first part of the book, the structural determinants of the industry's material practices are laid out through a productive use of varied sources, including original interviews and letters, a reading of contemporary trade magazines, and archival research. Leibman argues that our popular-historical memory of the period tends to separate the films and television programs as discrete entities, whereas they should be seen as of a piece in their promotion of the domestic melodrama. Such texts were released under the strain of a series of regulatory and consumerist demands, which the author unpacks in painstaking detail.

These assertions are supported by what is described as a "'nearly' close textual analysis" (12) of one of the decade's most popular genres. In practice, this somewhat clumsy label encompasses a mix of "nearly" superb critical readings (e.g., of *Blue Denim* and *A Hatful of Rain*) and sophisticated content analysis. Thematic patterns and stylistic repetitions are organized around questions of family power, gender, and economics, all of which are subjects of long chapters. Leibman convincingly shows that in the 1950s, the "family-protagonist" became the representational center of social life, and illustrates how the "family problem text" (21) resolves its numerous narrative trajectories. One of the book's strongest features is a habitual focus on how textual meaning is generated ideologically. In addition, helpful summaries along the way tidily pull together the main arguments of each chapter.

Leibman is undoubtedly right to claim that the texts share a similar male Oedipal logic, wherein the bonding of father and son is structured to resonate against the exclusion of the mother. The films often have a pivotal "male, adolescent, weepy scene" (137) to bring everything out into the open (*East of Eden*, *From the Terrace*, *Rebel Without a Cause*), whereas the television programs go in for "the talking punishment" (123), with father lecturing the kids while mother shambles around in the background. However, some of the conclusions subsequent to this are a little disappointing.

Perhaps because the case for the radical subversion of the film melodramatic family has been made many times before, Leibman puts forward a novel counterargument, namely that even though 1950s television domesticity represents a repressive, "sanitized familial enclave" (57), shows like "Father Knows Best" are "even more melodramatic than their filmic counterparts" (110). Now, redefining the television text as a domestic melodrama rather than a situation comedy certainly makes critical sense (today, melodrama is a sexier subject of academic analysis), but this is attempted without a satisfying concomitant interrogation of the family unit itself. The author writes in the language of discourse theory—the family is "a regulatory construct" (93), an "Ideological State Apparatus" (150)—and makes a few passing references to President Eisenhower's commission on family life and Dr. Spock's advice book, but she refuses to really engage either with existing historical work on the postwar family in its wider social context (cf. Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound*), or with more

radical family deconstructionists. For example, the author's reading of the father's ubiquitous narrative power might have been significantly energized by, say, a Foucault-type analysis of how, in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Big Daddy organizes the space of the family home through a relay of looks and surveillances. Indeed, one of Leibman's nicest throwaway conceits is along these very lines. In *My Three Sons*, aerospace consultant and father Steve Douglas "hovers over the periphery of his family" like ComSat, "beaming down messages, and alighting occasionally to remind them of his tangible and transcendental authority" (126).

Living Room Lectures starts with the hegemony of the nuclear unit and always circles back to it. Tellingly, despite a few words on xenophobia and racism, the startling whiteness of the 1950s television family is never remarked upon. (And isn't it significant that the families of the very few Asian and Hispanic—but never black—characters always remain offscreen, as if to put them center stage would provide the possibility of a sanctuary from WASP hegemony?) Yet the book's main weak spot is its number of contradictory statements. "Film . . . practiced a greater freedom of expression and diversity in the representation of American family life" (55), but "the episodic nature of television . . . allows a freedom of elasticity and breadth missing from the cinematic versions of family life" (47). In television, "writers worked within a pre-established framework of characters . . . this resulted in a sameness, both among episodes of a particular series and between individual series themselves" (51), and yet "although the programs entered into a tacit agreement with viewers that the central characters would remain (basically) unchanged, the structural reality of writers-for-hire dictated otherwise, resulting in a fluctuating perspective on the central family" (47).

In her conclusion, Leibman provides a brief, salutary reminder that we have been, and are, living through a time when family values are seemingly reconstructed out of a 1950s mould. While there is no acknowledgment that Hollywood has actually been investing most recently in the memory of an alternative family type from the 1960s ("The Addams Family," "The Beverly Hillbillies," "The Flintstones"), her point is well taken. When some nostalgic movie producer puts up enough money, and the time comes for "Leave It to Beaver" and "Father Knows Best" to get the big-screen treatment, I shall be grateful for being invited to think about how and why such conservative family configurations still appeal.

JULIAN STRINGER

■ Julian Stringer is in the graduate Film Studies Program at Indiana University, Bloomington.

Main Street Amusements

Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930

By Gregory A. Waller. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995. $49.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Gregory Waller makes an important contribution to the history of film with this volume, enriching our knowledge of the impact film had on American culture outside of the more frequently studied urban centers of the East Coast or the Middle West. Meticulously combing the surviving local newspapers of Lexington, Kentucky (which unfortunately, as Waller is the first to lament, did not include any of the African-American newspapers of central Kentucky—a gap he does his best to supplement), Waller presents a detailed narrative of how the movies first came to Lexington, when they became a regular attraction, and how the patterns of film exhibition changed over the three and a half decades he chronicles; he then speculates on what sorts of audiences they attracted. He presents a panorama that is rich in detail, strong in contrasts, and filled with change, revealing conflicts one might not expect and a variety of receptions of film that are striking in their shifting alliances.

Waller presents one of the first book-length studies of film exhibition available. Douglas Gomery's masterful pioneering overview of film exhibition in America was published just a few years ago, and awareness has been growing that the history of American cinema should never be limited to film production. While there have been a number of excellent essays about film exhibition in various cities in different periods and the Scribner's History of American Cinema has given exhibition generous coverage in its volumes, I know of no scholarly book-length account of film exhibition in any single city previous to Waller's. This alone makes the book a pioneering and important one. Further, the local, and indeed regional, focus of Waller's book fills a gap in our understanding of the history of film exhibition, giving a thorough presentation of how movies were introduced and became the center of commercial entertainment in a small city outside the better-known metropolises and below the Mason-Dixon line.

Case studies such as this one can perform two related but opposing tasks. First, they can help to sketch the broader picture of American film exhibition by establishing consistencies or exceptions with the sort of norms that Gomery sketches in his overviews. Secondly, if exceptions to these norms exist, the possibility of formulating an alternative local history exists. Waller's study

radical family deconstructionists. For example, the author's reading of the father's ubiquitous narrative power might have been significantly energized by, say, a Foucault-type analysis of how, in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Big Daddy organizes the space of the family home through a relay of looks and surveillances. Indeed, one of Leibman's nicest throwaway conceits is along these very lines. In *My Three Sons*, aerospace consultant and father Steve Douglas "hovers over the periphery of his family" like ComSat, "beaming down messages, and alighting occasionally to remind them of his tangible and transcendental authority" (126).

Living Room Lectures starts with the hegemony of the nuclear unit and always circles back to it. Tellingly, despite a few words on xenophobia and racism, the startling whiteness of the 1950s television family is never remarked upon. (And isn't it significant that the families of the very few Asian and Hispanic—but never black—characters always remain offscreen, as if to put them center stage would provide the possibility of a sanctuary from WASP hegemony?) Yet the book's main weak spot is its number of contradictory statements. "Film . . . practiced a greater freedom of expression and diversity in the representation of American family life" (55), but "the episodic nature of television . . . allows a freedom of elasticity and breadth missing from the cinematic versions of family life" (47). In television, "writers worked within a pre-established framework of characters . . . this resulted in a sameness, both among episodes of a particular series and between individual series themselves" (51), and yet "although the programs entered into a tacit agreement with viewers that the central characters would remain (basically) unchanged, the structural reality of writers-for-hire dictated otherwise, resulting in a fluctuating perspective on the central family" (47).

In her conclusion, Leibman provides a brief, salutary reminder that we have been, and are, living through a time when family values are seemingly reconstructed out of a 1950s mould. While there is no acknowledgment that Hollywood has actually been investing most recently in the memory of an alternative family type from the 1960s ("The Addams Family," "The Beverly Hillbillies," "The Flintstones"), her point is well taken. When some nostalgic movie producer puts up enough money, and the time comes for "Leave It to Beaver" and "Father Knows Best" to get the big-screen treatment, I shall be grateful for being invited to think about how and why such conservative family configurations still appeal.

JULIAN STRINGER

■ Julian Stringer is in the graduate Film Studies Program at Indiana University, Bloomington.

Main Street Amusements

Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930

By Gregory A. Waller. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995. $49.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Gregory Waller makes an important contribution to the history of film with this volume, enriching our knowledge of the impact film had on American culture outside of the more frequently studied urban centers of the East Coast or the Middle West. Meticulously combing the surviving local newspapers of Lexington, Kentucky (which unfortunately, as Waller is the first to lament, did not include any of the African-American newspapers of central Kentucky—a gap he does his best to supplement), Waller presents a detailed narrative of how the movies first came to Lexington, when they became a regular attraction, and how the patterns of film exhibition changed over the three and a half decades he chronicles; he then speculates on what sorts of audiences they attracted. He presents a panorama that is rich in detail, strong in contrasts, and filled with change, revealing conflicts one might not expect and a variety of receptions of film that are striking in their shifting alliances.

Waller presents one of the first book-length studies of film exhibition available. Douglas Gomery's masterful pioneering overview of film exhibition in America was published just a few years ago, and awareness has been growing that the history of American cinema should never be limited to film production. While there have been a number of excellent essays about film exhibition in various cities in different periods and the Scribner's History of American Cinema has given exhibition generous coverage in its volumes, I know of no scholarly book-length account of film exhibition in any single city previous to Waller's. This alone makes the book a pioneering and important one. Further, the local, and indeed regional, focus of Waller's book fills a gap in our understanding of the history of film exhibition, giving a thorough presentation of how movies were introduced and became the center of commercial entertainment in a small city outside the better-known metropolises and below the Mason-Dixon line.

Case studies such as this one can perform two related but opposing tasks. First, they can help to sketch the broader picture of American film exhibition by establishing consistencies or exceptions with the sort of norms that Gomery sketches in his overviews. Secondly, if exceptions to these norms exist, the possibility of formulating an alternative local history exists. Waller's study

contributes to both these tasks. In a broad sense, we find patterns here that appear to be consistent with national norms.

Films were introduced at the turn of the century in Lexington as a novelty, as in most American communities. However, the lack of a vaudeville theater in Lexington means that we find here a local variation, as films are introduced as the latest novelty in a variety of situations: as an entr'acte attraction within a dramatic touring show; as featured attraction in a hall specially rented to exhibit the film novelty; or even as an additional attraction in a monkey act appearing at the local Opera House. Waller stresses something here that I think will prove to be true of most nonmetropolitan locales (and we may find it in some metropolitan situations as well): that film was shown in a large range of venues (fairs, summer parks, church functions) besides vaudeville, before nickelodeons established themselves around 1906 (Lexington gets its first nickel house in June of that year). Indeed, the basic pattern that Waller sets out for Lexington seems to reflect national trends: a novelty period; a period with a range of venues; a nickelodeon period with a fair amount of financial fluctuation; a settling-down of business with the coming of features with a growing sense of hierarchy among theaters (from the high-class vaudeville theaters that appear in Lexington in the early teens to low-priced grind houses specializing in short Western films).

At the same time, regional differences do assert themselves, and since Waller has chosen a Southern border town, policies of racial segregation become particularly important. Waller sets out a variety of "Jim Crow" approaches that were tried by different theaters, from setting aside a separate seating area (often supplied with a separate entrance) to enforcing a "whites only" policy (introduced especially by the "high class" theaters in the early 1920s), to the usually financially marginal attempts to offer theaters specifically designed for African-American audiences. Waller does a careful job of gathering information about the way the movies fit into racial policies in Lexington and the daily experience of African Americans, providing information not only about black attendance, but also about the discourse surrounding films in the black community, particularly detailing the reactions to Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. Here it is the richness of detail that supplements other similar studies, revealing how difficult it was to make a black film theater succeed, and providing information about the films shown, as programs of the usual commercial studio films alternated with an eagerly sought small number of black-produced films.

In many ways what Waller presents best in this volume—beyond its intricate narrative of the opening and closing of theaters, their different seating capacities and programming policies, and the local discourse about the value or, occasionally, the threat of films to local well-being—is a sense of the way film fit into a general ecology of entertainments. Waller masterfully describes film's relation to such other forms or sites of entertainment as the Lexington Opera House, the summertime Chautauqua lectures series, the introduction of vaudeville, and the variety of touring shows and seasonal fairs. In this regard, the book's original title, *Taking in the Movies*, seems to me not only wittier than the current one, but also more descriptive. Waller does offer a panorama of main street amusements here, but primarily in terms of their relation to the movies, how they accommodated, adapted to, resisted, or were overcome by the cinema. The relation is a nuanced one, and not simply the streamlined narrative of the replacement of the traditional Opera House by the Picture Palace rehearsed by historians like Lary May.

Waller shows that the picture palace as defined by previous historians may have played a lesser role in the way films were experienced by people outside metropolitan centers. However, the basic drift of his account does move from more communal and local entertainment entrepreneurs to a nationally based exhibition policy, a current of change exemplified when the oldest Lexington movie theater, the Orpheum (established in 1912) became part of the Publix circuit in 1929. The coming of sound, and with it the elimination of local musicians, also contributes to a certain loss of local flavor at the end of Waller's period. Further, as Waller points out in his discussion of reaction to the Fatty Arbuckle scandal in 1923, Hollywood became understood as an entity that spoke to the nation with a single voice, part of a national media consciousness, even before the advent of radio.

If there is a weakness in Waller's book, it remains closely linked to its dominant strength: the richness of detail. Waller provides everything we would ever want to know about film exhibition in Lexington in this period. While it always makes intriguing reading, we are sometimes left without a guide to its importance. Certainly the broad purposes of the book as I have outlined it are clear. But at points it tends to fragment into a series of issues and concerns rather than providing a powerful organizing principle. In this way it contrasts with previous studies of entertainments in specific localities, such as Roy Rosenzweig's study of Worcester working-class entertainments or Kathy Peiss's study of working-class women amusements in New York City at the turn of the century. Rosenzweig's work centers on the conflict over the working class's right to define its own use of leisure time. Although he covers a longer time period and broader range of entertainments, Rosenzweig constructs

his book around this central conflict. Similarly, Peiss's theory of the breakdown of an older "homosocial" world of male entertainments gives her study a central social narrative and analysis. Waller presents many insights, but lacks a strong central thesis, which makes his book remain primarily descriptive.

At points, in fact, the work makes clear the dangers of too simple an understanding of reception studies as an attempt to recover the mental processes of any particular audience. We can never get around the fact that such mental states remain inaccessible to us. What we do have are a series of discourses (whether in the local press, city ordinances, architectural layout of theaters, or local legend) that can be richly interpreted by historians for what they reveal (or distort, or repress) about contemporary audiences. But any historian pursuing what the audience "really felt" may be chasing will-o'-the-wisps. At a few points Waller seems drawn into this sort of cul-de-sac of speculation, adding that "such unanswered questions are, of course, endemic to reception studies" (172). Undoubtedly true, particularly when one is trying, as Waller is, to recreate the reception of populations—like African Americans—whose discourse has often perished from neglect and the racist policies of archives. However, I also feel that we can never fully recover the "experience" of audiences, only the contexts of regulation and resistance embodied in historical evidence. Peiss and Rosenzweig set up clear scenarios of what these social conflicts are, but this is less highlighted in Waller's work.

Yet if this is my main criticism of this book, it certainly shows the high standards of comparison that I bring to it, and therefore the high standard of research it achieves. Careful, detailed description of film exhibition of this sort is vital in a new field such as the cultural history of film, and Waller provides a work that will point the way for many scholars to come. We owe it a debt—and a careful reading.

TOM GUNNING

■ Tom Gunning teaches in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at Northwestern University.

Mists of Regret

Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film

By Dudley Andrew. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995. $59.50 cloth; $24.95 paper.

Mists of Regret is an important new book on a topic vital to cinema history; it joins Lagny, Ropars, and Sorlin's *Générique des années trente* as basic, required reading on French films of the 1930s. Unlike the latter work, however, this is a book that attempts to use its own language in expressive ways, to find stylistic nuances and (occasionally far-fetched) rhetorical figures to communicate ideas and feelings that ordinary academic prose cannot. Much of this effort succeeds very well, though there are exceptions. In a book that attempts to have a style, and not merely be about a style, there is a rushed, confused quality to some of the writing, particularly the crucial transitional passages where historical arguments are laid out or recapitulated. Nonetheless, one must salute Andrew for his enterprise: when he writes well, he writes beautifully. This happens most often in the passages on individual films, many of which are little critical gems full of new insights and wonderfully evocative prose.

Occasionally, when Andrew is not treating individual works, a certain opacity of style and argument creeps in as he makes his properly historical arguments. This is a book that attempts to do history from the ground up, as it were, with the focus on individual works. And so, when the author argues that French "poetic realism" is best viewed not as a style or as a movement, but as an *optique*, he doesn't spend nearly enough time making it absolutely clear what an *optique* is and how *réalisme poetique* constituted one. Poetic realism, in any event—whether it be a school, style, movement, or tendency (which is my favorite term for it)—is the real center of the book. *Mists of Regret* is not about the 1930s as much as it is about the 1930s in the perspective of a certain critically acclaimed group of films.

The book's central thesis is that poetic realist films proceed "analogously"—and not "directly"—to model social experience: "Poetic realism promises to deliver not a message about frustrated desire, or oppression, or bartered hopes, or helplessness, but the very experience of these feelings" (20). Andrew wants to situate the key films of the tendency in what has gone before (reaching back to "impressionist" film-making and even to Louis Feuillade), and to expand the canon of poetic realist texts. In attempting to provide a new perspective on these works, he generally shuns the kind of overtly political readings that have been the center of most previous studies. It seems to me that he sometimes takes this tactic a bit too far; one questionable practice in the book is the quotation of critics from the period without identification of their political orientation or, often, even their names. One can consult the footnotes, of course, but it surely is important that, for example, some judgments cited without comment come from the extreme right-

his book around this central conflict. Similarly, Peiss's theory of the breakdown of an older "homosocial" world of male entertainments gives her study a central social narrative and analysis. Waller presents many insights, but lacks a strong central thesis, which makes his book remain primarily descriptive.

At points, in fact, the work makes clear the dangers of too simple an understanding of reception studies as an attempt to recover the mental processes of any particular audience. We can never get around the fact that such mental states remain inaccessible to us. What we do have are a series of discourses (whether in the local press, city ordinances, architectural layout of theaters, or local legend) that can be richly interpreted by historians for what they reveal (or distort, or repress) about contemporary audiences. But any historian pursuing what the audience "really felt" may be chasing will-o'-the-wisps. At a few points Waller seems drawn into this sort of cul-de-sac of speculation, adding that "such unanswered questions are, of course, endemic to reception studies" (172). Undoubtedly true, particularly when one is trying, as Waller is, to recreate the reception of populations—like African Americans—whose discourse has often perished from neglect and the racist policies of archives. However, I also feel that we can never fully recover the "experience" of audiences, only the contexts of regulation and resistance embodied in historical evidence. Peiss and Rosenzweig set up clear scenarios of what these social conflicts are, but this is less highlighted in Waller's work.

Yet if this is my main criticism of this book, it certainly shows the high standards of comparison that I bring to it, and therefore the high standard of research it achieves. Careful, detailed description of film exhibition of this sort is vital in a new field such as the cultural history of film, and Waller provides a work that will point the way for many scholars to come. We owe it a debt—and a careful reading.

TOM GUNNING

■ Tom Gunning teaches in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at Northwestern University.

Mists of Regret

Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film

By Dudley Andrew. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995. $59.50 cloth; $24.95 paper.

Mists of Regret is an important new book on a topic vital to cinema history; it joins Lagny, Ropars, and Sorlin's *Générique des années trente* as basic, required reading on French films of the 1930s. Unlike the latter work, however, this is a book that attempts to use its own language in expressive ways, to find stylistic nuances and (occasionally far-fetched) rhetorical figures to communicate ideas and feelings that ordinary academic prose cannot. Much of this effort succeeds very well, though there are exceptions. In a book that attempts to have a style, and not merely be about a style, there is a rushed, confused quality to some of the writing, particularly the crucial transitional passages where historical arguments are laid out or recapitulated. Nonetheless, one must salute Andrew for his enterprise: when he writes well, he writes beautifully. This happens most often in the passages on individual films, many of which are little critical gems full of new insights and wonderfully evocative prose.

Occasionally, when Andrew is not treating individual works, a certain opacity of style and argument creeps in as he makes his properly historical arguments. This is a book that attempts to do history from the ground up, as it were, with the focus on individual works. And so, when the author argues that French "poetic realism" is best viewed not as a style or as a movement, but as an *optique*, he doesn't spend nearly enough time making it absolutely clear what an *optique* is and how *réalisme poetique* constituted one. Poetic realism, in any event—whether it be a school, style, movement, or tendency (which is my favorite term for it)—is the real center of the book. *Mists of Regret* is not about the 1930s as much as it is about the 1930s in the perspective of a certain critically acclaimed group of films.

The book's central thesis is that poetic realist films proceed "analogously"—and not "directly"—to model social experience: "Poetic realism promises to deliver not a message about frustrated desire, or oppression, or bartered hopes, or helplessness, but the very experience of these feelings" (20). Andrew wants to situate the key films of the tendency in what has gone before (reaching back to "impressionist" film-making and even to Louis Feuillade), and to expand the canon of poetic realist texts. In attempting to provide a new perspective on these works, he generally shuns the kind of overtly political readings that have been the center of most previous studies. It seems to me that he sometimes takes this tactic a bit too far; one questionable practice in the book is the quotation of critics from the period without identification of their political orientation or, often, even their names. One can consult the footnotes, of course, but it surely is important that, for example, some judgments cited without comment come from the extreme right-

wing *Action Française*. This was a period when practically all film reviewing was political, for the simple reason that all major publications had a political "line" to be respected, or at least acknowledged, by all contributors.

Presumably, Dudley Andrew thinks that the political aspect of 1930s French cinema has assumed too much importance in standard histories, though in parts of his book he gives some fascinating information in this area (as when he notes that Duvivier dedicated his masterly *La Bandera* to Generalissimo Francisco Franco). All of which is indicative of *Mists of Regret*'s one great strength, which can also pose a problem for general readers: Andrew seems resolutely determined to say mainly things not said in other books (in addition to saying these things *differently*—with a figure-laden prose style). This is very useful for those who know this particular critical and historiographical terrain, but can pose traps for the unwary. Still, the author is clearly right about what he does best; the most useful and estimable portions of the book almost always concern films or historical phenomena that have thus far received little attention. *Mists of Regret* offers a highly idiosyncratic view of "poetic realism" and its cultural and aesthetic context. It is a work of immense value, an individualistic and evocative contribution to the larger dialogue about "classic" French cinema.

ALAN WILLIAMS

■ Alan Williams is the author of *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking* and director of Cinema Studies at Rutgers University.

Redeeming the Wasteland

Television Documentary and Cold War Politics

By Michael Curtin. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995. $52.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

In late November, 1960, one of the most famous documentaries of all time appeared on U.S. television—Ed Murrow's *Harvest of Shame*. In the same week, NBC broadcast *The U-2 Affair*, an award-winning investigation of a Soviet attack on a U.S. spy plane. A few days later, "ABC Close Up" broadcast *Yanki No!*, an ABC look at Fidel Castro's expanding influence in South America. These programs highlighted the rapid expansion and growing presence of documentary on prime-time television. Few understood what was happening at the time, but within a few months network practices with regard to documentary would be transformed dramatically.

Two years earlier, in the same period in 1958, not a single documentary was to be found on any of the network prime-time schedules. Yet in 1962 the networks produced over 400 documentaries, sending them out via flagship programs such as "CBS Reports," "NBC Whitepaper," and "ABC Close Up." How this transformation came out, why it came about, and why the golden age eventually petered out is the subject of Michael Curtin's *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics.*

The book is superb—the best and most interesting book on documentary I have read in over ten years. It is a wonderful, provocative, and readable combination of documentary criticism, social history, media investigation, professional analysis, and audience survey. It is a "must" for any serious student of documentary or American television.

Curtin's thesis is stated early on. The book is about "a distinct and complicated moment when political and corporate leaders as well as network officials embraced the television documentary in an explicit attempt to mobilize public opinion behind a more activist foreign policy." According to Curtin, network documentaries, far from being objective, played an important role in the production and circulation of Cold War ideology.

This thesis has been around for a number of years, but Curtin attempts to give it chapter and verse. This is done through the citation of various interviews with government and network officials, and through quotation from various documents. The case is also made through a very thorough analysis of the shape and content of the network programs, particularly in chapter 2, "Documentaries of the Communist Other." The case is persuasive, but too much reliance is given to the statements of executive producers like Irv Gitlin, and not enough to others like Arthur Barron, Al Wasserman, or Douglas Leiterman.

The only part of the book that seems to me overstated is Curtin's discussion of the efforts of the networks to go global. Clearly, in the 60s, the networks were making vast efforts to step up their involvement in foreign markets. Part of this was worry about market saturation at home; another part was due to the idea that money could be made by equipping foreign television and supplying global programming. Though Curtin describes all this well and accurately, I do not believe that foreign sales of documentaries were ever regarded as a serious financial proposition, nor do I believe that net-

wing *Action Française*. This was a period when practically all film reviewing was political, for the simple reason that all major publications had a political "line" to be respected, or at least acknowledged, by all contributors.

Presumably, Dudley Andrew thinks that the political aspect of 1930s French cinema has assumed too much importance in standard histories, though in parts of his book he gives some fascinating information in this area (as when he notes that Duvivier dedicated his masterly *La Bandera* to Generalissimo Francisco Franco). All of which is indicative of *Mists of Regret*'s one great strength, which can also pose a problem for general readers: Andrew seems resolutely determined to say mainly things not said in other books (in addition to saying these things *differently*—with a figure-laden prose style). This is very useful for those who know this particular critical and historiographical terrain, but can pose traps for the unwary. Still, the author is clearly right about what he does best; the most useful and estimable portions of the book almost always concern films or historical phenomena that have thus far received little attention. *Mists of Regret* offers a highly idiosyncratic view of "poetic realism" and its cultural and aesthetic context. It is a work of immense value, an individualistic and evocative contribution to the larger dialogue about "classic" French cinema.

ALAN WILLIAMS

■ Alan Williams is the author of *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking* and director of Cinema Studies at Rutgers University.

Redeeming the Wasteland

Television Documentary and Cold War Politics

By Michael Curtin. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995. $52.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

In late November, 1960, one of the most famous documentaries of all time appeared on U.S. television—Ed Murrow's *Harvest of Shame*. In the same week, NBC broadcast *The U-2 Affair*, an award-winning investigation of a Soviet attack on a U.S. spy plane. A few days later, "ABC Close Up" broadcast *Yanki No!*, an ABC look at Fidel Castro's expanding influence in South America. These programs highlighted the rapid expansion and growing presence of documentary on prime-time television. Few understood what was happening at the time, but within a few months network practices with regard to documentary would be transformed dramatically.

Two years earlier, in the same period in 1958, not a single documentary was to be found on any of the network prime-time schedules. Yet in 1962 the networks produced over 400 documentaries, sending them out via flagship programs such as "CBS Reports," "NBC Whitepaper," and "ABC Close Up." How this transformation came out, why it came about, and why the golden age eventually petered out is the subject of Michael Curtin's *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics.*

The book is superb—the best and most interesting book on documentary I have read in over ten years. It is a wonderful, provocative, and readable combination of documentary criticism, social history, media investigation, professional analysis, and audience survey. It is a "must" for any serious student of documentary or American television.

Curtin's thesis is stated early on. The book is about "a distinct and complicated moment when political and corporate leaders as well as network officials embraced the television documentary in an explicit attempt to mobilize public opinion behind a more activist foreign policy." According to Curtin, network documentaries, far from being objective, played an important role in the production and circulation of Cold War ideology.

This thesis has been around for a number of years, but Curtin attempts to give it chapter and verse. This is done through the citation of various interviews with government and network officials, and through quotation from various documents. The case is also made through a very thorough analysis of the shape and content of the network programs, particularly in chapter 2, "Documentaries of the Communist Other." The case is persuasive, but too much reliance is given to the statements of executive producers like Irv Gitlin, and not enough to others like Arthur Barron, Al Wasserman, or Douglas Leiterman.

The only part of the book that seems to me overstated is Curtin's discussion of the efforts of the networks to go global. Clearly, in the 60s, the networks were making vast efforts to step up their involvement in foreign markets. Part of this was worry about market saturation at home; another part was due to the idea that money could be made by equipping foreign television and supplying global programming. Though Curtin describes all this well and accurately, I do not believe that foreign sales of documentaries were ever regarded as a serious financial proposition, nor do I believe that net-

work and government executives seriously saw foreign distribution as bringing a light to the nations.

However, these are minor criticisms. One of the attractions of Curtin's book is that he lights up so many fascinating areas. Some readers will choose to concentrate on his analysis of the multiple and shifting relations between government, the TV industry, and the viewers. Here an excellent discussion of the 50s TV wasteland is added to an extremely penetrating analysis of Kennedy New Deal objectives and politics. This was the time when TV, via documentary, promised to be a window onto the free world, a world described by President Kennedy as full of promise and peril.

For myself, a practicing film-maker, the most interesting part of the book is Curtin's discussion of the networks' pursuit of objectivity, their problems with style and narrative method, and their confusions in dealing with government-inspired propaganda. Thus Curtin writes, "As journalists they were torn between objectivity and activism. As producers they had to balance the competing demands of information and narrative style. As programmers they had to weigh popularity against social significance." These last remarks are addressed, among other targets, to the influence of Hollywood narrative style on the documentary. So we see how the pursuit of drama, conflict, and the appealing human story kept bending the simplified political aims of the networks.

This part of the book also presents an intriguing account of the day-to-day dilemmas facing the individual reporter and producer. Sent to do one story—say, of "evil" Communist influence in South America—the producer would often return with a story that contradicted the basic thesis. Squaring the circle, and preserving one's own integrity, then became one of the biggest problems. Here Curtin never quite lets us know how far the individual producers realized they were part of an overall political plan. In my own conversations with a few 60s network producers like Arthur Barron, Mort Silverstein, and Al Perlmutter, they denied trying to promote any particular governmental policy or social philosophy. Most considered themselves investigative reporters, merely working according to the dictates of a strong liberal conscience.

Another brilliant and vital chapter of the book is devoted to audience response. The proliferation of documentary was government-inspired. The Kennedy politicians sought to use the form to mobilize public opinion behind a more activist policy. What Curtin shows is that the policy was a dismal failure. The programs were seen as elitist, and had low viewing figures. Explicitly addressed to a white, male, middle-class audience, they marginalized both women and African-American viewers, even when dealing sympathetically with subjects such as racial segregation. In short, in spite of a massive investment of resources, television documentary never stood up to the persuasive powers attributed to it.

Besides being a fine book, *Redeeming the Wasteland* implicitly provokes the reader into thinking about the current state of documentary scholarship. Today scholarship in the genre tends to concentrate on subjects such as cinéma vérité, theory, personal film-making, black and gay issues, and experimental documentary. "Investigative TV documentary" is a dirty expression. Few documentary seminars and festivals have time for the form, and it is definitely not an "in" subject for research. The only serious works which deal with TV documentary, besides a few interview books, are William Bluehm's *Documentary on American Television* (1965) and Brian Winston's provocative and stimulating *Claiming the Real* (1995). This whole situation seems to me to be absurd—absurd if one considers that the point of documentary is to touch contemporary social and political issues in the most provocative way, and to reach the mass audience in an attempt to bring about change. The 400 network documentaries of 1962 tried to do that; until Curtin, documentary scholarship couldn't give a damn.

My hope is that Curtin's book will provoke a regrounding of documentary scholarship, since the questions he raises are vital but almost totally neglected. The questions have to do with the goals of documentary; their relationship to political struggle; the ability of the genre to bring about social change; the nature of objectivity; the role of television documentary today; and, above all, the nature of audience reception.

Curtin doesn't discuss modern TV documentary, and that may be because the subject is so depressing. But he ends with a vital suggestion with which I think most of us concur—that media should be studied not as technologies for the transmission of information, but as sites of social contest over the production of meaning. *Redeeming the Wasteland* is an inspiring example of how such studies can and should be undertaken.

ALAN ROSENTHAL

■ Alan Rosenthal is a writer and director of documentaries; he teaches at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Sets in Motion

Art Direction and Film Narrative

By Charles Affron and Mirella Jona Affron. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995. $55.00 cloth; $22.50 paper.

The nature of art direction lends itself to neglect by scholars. Although there have certainly been "prima donnas" among the Hollywood art directors, the main role of designers is "an exercise in self-effacement, in self-denial, in disappearance" (45). Known variously as "art director," "architect," "decorator," or "painter-artist," the person who designs the sets for a film is an integral, but little-publicized, member of the cinematic team. *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative* is the first examination of art direction to provide a precise framework within which to analyze the role a particular set might play in a film's overall effect. Charles and Mirella Affron categorize sets, according to varying degrees of design intensity, as denotation, punctuation, embellishment, artifice, or narrative. Although a particular set might partake of several of these qualities, the authors choose to describe a film's overall design schema according to its relative transparency or opacity in relation to the narrative.

Citing Expressionism, Realism, and the Hollywood mode of production as the three main influences on the history of art direction in the cinema, the Affrons underline the rigor, excitement, and dignity of this versatile art form. It is also not without its own form of humor. For example, note the words of director Lewis Milestone about art director and sometime-director William Cameron Menzies: "The problem with Bill, when he directed, was that he detested actors. He said, you build a wonderful set, and then you put those Hamlets in it and they ruin it" (9).

According to the framework established in *Sets in Motion*, the "denotative set" is the easiest to define: "low-budget, often stock, forgettable, rhetorically and stylistically undistinguished" (37). "Punctuative decor" in films like *Mildred Pierce*, *Duel in the Sun*, and *Laura* is defined as verisimilitudinous, surpassing standard generic requirements, and often expressive of the nature of a character. "Set as embellishment," in contrast, is neither denotative nor punctuative. The authors explain that "decor at the embellishing level of design intensity . . . oblige[s] the spectator to read design as a specific necessity of the narrative" (82–83). The Affrons focus on such films as *La Kermesse heroique*, *Cabiria*, *The Fountainhead*, and *The Towering Inferno* in their discussion of embellishing sets as imitative of art, archeology, and modern architecture, and as colossal designs.

"Artifice" covers a wide range of overtly metaphorical set designs, from *Metropolis* to *2001: A Space Odyssey* to Busby Berkeley's musical extravaganzas. In terms of science-fiction films, the Affrons quote Susan Sontag's cogent comment that "a greater range of ethical values is embodied in the decor of these films than in the people."[1] The authors cite instances when art directors emphasize the artifice of the stage, as in some of the Zeffirelli productions of Shakespearean plays. Laurence Olivier's insights into the sets for his *Henry V* are revealing: "My only hope was for the background to be more unreal than it was, so the language would seem real" (136).

For the "set as narrative," the authors take note of films (like *The Heiress*, *How Green Was My Valley*, and *Dead End*), whose stories take place within a relatively small area and employ a relatively stationary camera. Paradoxically, this lack of reliance on showy sets or on virtuosic camera movement makes the set itself a kind of character. The Affrons note that in this restrained but creative situation, "the circumscribed set enjoys a privileged relationship to the narrative," and can actually embody the film's essential qualities and essential action (158).

The final chapter and the appendices of *Sets in Motion* focus on practical aspects of staffing and judging art direction. The attempt here to establish a set-design canon can only mark a beginning effort. More helpful are the summaries offered in chapter 2 of the work of film theorists and historians like the Spanish critic Juan Antonio Ramirez, with his delineation of six properties of cinematic set design, or of the authors of *La cost ruzione del labirinto* who state (in the Affrons' words) that decor has a double nature: "ephemeral in its status as set, permanent in its status as image" (32). As with any attempt to present frameworks, the holes in the structure become easier to see; one should, however, note the contribution made by the taxonomy itself.

LINDA C. EHRLICH

■ Linda C. Ehrlich teaches at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio.

1. "The Imagination of Disaster," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, 1966), p. 216.

Stalinism and Soviet Cinema

Edited by Richard Taylor and Derek Spring. New York: Routledge, 1993. $62.95.

This book of essays, originating from papers delivered at a London conference in 1990 on "Russian and Soviet Cinema," is leavened by black humor, but nevertheless makes grim reading. Because of its origins, a degree of unevenness is probably unavoidable—a conference does not a collection make. Rashit Yangirov on the Lenin cult is inconclusive and seemingly at odds with Anna Lawton's remarks on the same theme; Maya Turovskaya on "The 1930s and 1940s" manages to be wacky and statistical at the same time; Valeriya Selunskaya and Maria Zezina write a chapter as dull as the documentaries discussed; Ian Christie is tough going on "The Director in Soviet Cinema"; Maya Turovskaya's "Soviet Films of the Cold War" is a bit thin, as is Ekaterina Khokhlova on "Forbidden Films of the 1930s." But Maria Enzensberger and Leonid Kozlov provide two good cameo pieces, on Alexandrov's *The Radiant Path* and Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, respectively; Peter Kenez's "Soviet Cinema in the Age of Stalin" and Svetlana Boym's "Stalin is with Us" come up with gold dust in abundance; and Richard Taylor's "Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults" is not far behind. For once, the unevenness of this collection doesn't really matter, for unifying themes do emerge, and all of them deepen our understanding of the crazy logic that was Stalinism.

One such theme is that of pure decline, decline that was numerical as well as aesthetic. The statistics alone are staggering. In the late 1920s, Soviet studios produced from 120 to 140 films per annum; by 1933, yearly output had dropped to 33 features, a number that remained stationary until 1940. In Peter Kenez's words, "the golden age was brief and the eclipse sudden and long-lasting." Artistically successful silent films, made in a Bolshevik spirit, had not reached a mass audience. According to both Lenin and Stalin, films were supposed to be "intelligible to the millions." In Richard Taylor's words, "to a considerable extent the avant-garde produced a convenient scapegoat for politicians seeking to explain why Soviet cinemagoers preferred a diet of salacious love-intrigues to edifying stories of socialist construction. But it also provided a convenient whipping boy for younger and/or less talented film-makers who saw their own career opportunities improving as the careers of the great names slipped into decline."

This book does *not* tell the story of the lone artist struggling valiantly against a purblind political elite in the name of freedom of expression; such a fable would obscure the dimensions of what Ian Christie calls "the Faustian pact between film-makers and the state." There was little conflict between the two. They were not enemies, they were collaborators—artists became state functionaries, party functionaries co-authors. The system made almost everyone an accomplice, and the record of film-makers (who duly denounced one another and themselves) was neither better nor worse than that of other groups in Soviet society, in a story from which no one comes out looking good.

Françoise Ninay isolated five themes within Socialist Realism that had to be reflected, and were reflected, constantly: (1) the radiant future; (2) the guiding genius, father of the people, "the artist's teacher and friend"; (3) the nefarious plots of enemies of the people, traitors, and saboteurs; (4) the prowess of heroes of labor; (5) the victories of production. Of the 108 films Soviet studios released between 1935 and 1940, 61 dealt with the Revolution and the Civil War (after a fashion: "a film in which Red Army soldiers were killed was regarded as a very serious mistake"). Of the remainder, some were historical spectacles (and "shamelessly anachronistic" ones: in Petrov-Bytov's 1937 *Pugachev*, "Pugachev and Stenka Razin, two [18th-century] Cossack rebels, are shown . . . analyzing class relations in Marxist terms, and, before their execution, consoling their followers by predicting the coming of a great and glorious revolution"). More films set in the present take place on collective farms than in factories, and these, in contrast to "construction dramas," are likely to be musicals. As Kenez dryly puts it, "a Soviet person who received all his or her information from movies might have thought that life in the countryside was a round of never-ending dancing and singing." He might have added that the wartime U.S. films set in the U.S.S.R., like *Song of Russia*, portray life in the Russian countryside in very much the same way, an instance of the crazy logic of the cold war *in nuce.*

The films that got exhibited are only the tip of the Socialist-Realist iceberg. Kenez estimates that a third of studio output never got released; in 1935–36 *alone,* 37 films (that had cost the state 15 million rubles) were shelved as "ideological rejects." The number of scripts rejected rose steeply, and "script-hunger" (*stsenarnyi golod*) developed apace; scripts not rejected outright were subjected to ever-increasing comment and revision, from below as well as above. "Finished" films were themselves regarded as candidates for further "improvement." Ivan Pyriev's *Conveyor Belt of Death*—set outside the U.S.S.R. (which is why its street signs are interchangeably in English, French, and German)—was re-

made 14 times. Kenez is adamant: "The fundamental cause of the decline in the number of films made and exhibited was not disorganization (because of the purges) but the fact that the authorities set ever more difficult requirements for film-makers."

Socialist Realism is best understood, in Kenez's words, as "middlebrow, formulaic art that excludes irony and, above all, ambiguity. It is bitterly hostile to experimentation with form, for this . . . would lessen the didactic value of the product. . . . Stylistic heterodoxy is bound to lead to ambiguity of meaning, and that is something a totalitarian political order cannot tolerate." This can have ironic effects. Lev Kuleshov's *The Great Consoler*, which uses Aesopian language about freedom of expression and is an explicitly anti-Stalinist film, was exhibited and reviewed widely, while others made by fawning directors who tried to work in the Stalinist mold were rejected. Nobody dared to say that they understood *The Great Consoler*'s subversive message—only an enemy of the people could think a film set in the U.S. was in any way relevant to the U.S.S.R. The very thought that the Stalinist regime suppressed freedom of speech was, well, unthinkable.

This lone exception proves the rule—that Socialist Realism replaces realism with the appearance of realism; an alternative reality gets constructed to take the place of an unsatisfactory actual reality. The result is that (in Maria Enzensberger's words) "people see themselves as they really are—i.e., workers and peasants—and, at the same time, as they would ideally like to be—glorious heroes and heroines, unique, powerful, prosperous and celebrated." It is this interplay of symbolic and realistic discourses that enables them, in Maya Turovskaya's words, to act "not so much as the reflection of their time's objective reality, but rather as the reflection of the reality of its image of itself." Socialist Realism was a hall of mirrors whose main inhabitant was Stalin himself.

Stalin's constant presence gives a kind of mad unity to all the essays in this volume; he "personally viewed and approved every film exhibited in the Soviet Union" and "micromanaged the film industry; he suggested changes, altered titles, reviewed scripts, and recommended topics." As Stalin withdrew from the real world, in the sense of seeing actual factories, collective farms, villages, and even the streets of Moscow, his view of the world came to be more and more determined by what he saw on the screen. At the same time, writers, directors, studio heads, and ministry officials were obliged to anticipate Stalin's reactions to their projects; their caution became the major factor inhibiting not just content but also output. The grotesque result was that what Stalin increasingly saw were simulacra of himself. As André Bazin has noted, Stalin's "living mummification" on the screen gave him magical attributes: he could be all-knowing, all-powerful, paternal, sexual, immortal. In Ian Christie's words, "for the dictator who had shaped the whole Soviet state in his own image, cinema represented an equivalent superreality," belief in which "enabled him to break the taboo on fictional self-representation which all other twentieth-century leaders instinctively respected." Actors portrayed not just Lenin after his death, but Stalin—at a time when the real Stalin was very much in a position to see "himself" on the screen.

PAUL THOMAS

■ Paul Thomas teaches in the Political Science Department at the University of California at Berkeley.

The Studio System

Edited by Janet Staiger. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995. $48.00 cloth; $16.00 paper.

In *The Studio System*, Janet Staiger and her contributors take some close historical looks at Hollywood as a social construct, principally through methods supplied by sociologists (in the tradition of Joseph Turow, Paul DiMaggio, Richard A. Peterson, and Paul M. Hirsch). Their common research questions concern such matters as production norms, work routines, and product conventions. Specifically, they argue that we should closely examine all the workers in the Hollywood system, not just the director as auteur or the producer as dominating force. Collective groups make Hollywood movies, and their social relations ought to be studied. In this anthology the emphasis is firmly on social—not economic—relations. We read of conflicts in resolving the many necessary production decisions, of the impact and influence of all the compromises necessary to remain a stable and effective working group, and of the effects of budgets on this complex creative process.

In this new anthology, targeted for professors of film history and their students, Staiger has collected 14 essays that offer a detailed examination of what it was like to work in Hollywood from its earliest days through the late 1950s. There is no treatment of the sociology of the studio labor process after 1960, following explicitly on the periodization set forth in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, published a decade ago by David Bordwell, Staiger, and

made 14 times. Kenez is adamant: "The fundamental cause of the decline in the number of films made and exhibited was not disorganization (because of the purges) but the fact that the authorities set ever more difficult requirements for film-makers."

Socialist Realism is best understood, in Kenez's words, as "middlebrow, formulaic art that excludes irony and, above all, ambiguity. It is bitterly hostile to experimentation with form, for this . . . would lessen the didactic value of the product. . . . Stylistic heterodoxy is bound to lead to ambiguity of meaning, and that is something a totalitarian political order cannot tolerate." This can have ironic effects. Lev Kuleshov's *The Great Consoler*, which uses Aesopian language about freedom of expression and is an explicitly anti-Stalinist film, was exhibited and reviewed widely, while others made by fawning directors who tried to work in the Stalinist mold were rejected. Nobody dared to say that they understood *The Great Consoler*'s subversive message—only an enemy of the people could think a film set in the U.S. was in any way relevant to the U.S.S.R. The very thought that the Stalinist regime suppressed freedom of speech was, well, unthinkable.

This lone exception proves the rule—that Socialist Realism replaces realism with the appearance of realism; an alternative reality gets constructed to take the place of an unsatisfactory actual reality. The result is that (in Maria Enzensberger's words) "people see themselves as they really are—i.e., workers and peasants—and, at the same time, as they would ideally like to be—glorious heroes and heroines, unique, powerful, prosperous and celebrated." It is this interplay of symbolic and realistic discourses that enables them, in Maya Turovskaya's words, to act "not so much as the reflection of their time's objective reality, but rather as the reflection of the reality of its image of itself." Socialist Realism was a hall of mirrors whose main inhabitant was Stalin himself.

Stalin's constant presence gives a kind of mad unity to all the essays in this volume; he "personally viewed and approved every film exhibited in the Soviet Union" and "micromanaged the film industry; he suggested changes, altered titles, reviewed scripts, and recommended topics." As Stalin withdrew from the real world, in the sense of seeing actual factories, collective farms, villages, and even the streets of Moscow, his view of the world came to be more and more determined by what he saw on the screen. At the same time, writers, directors, studio heads, and ministry officials were obliged to anticipate Stalin's reactions to their projects; their caution became the major factor inhibiting not just content but also output. The grotesque result was that what Stalin increasingly saw were simulacra of himself. As André Bazin has noted, Stalin's "living mummification" on the screen gave him magical attributes: he could be all-knowing, all-powerful, paternal, sexual, immortal. In Ian Christie's words, "for the dictator who had shaped the whole Soviet state in his own image, cinema represented an equivalent superreality," belief in which "enabled him to break the taboo on fictional self-representation which all other twentieth-century leaders instinctively respected." Actors portrayed not just Lenin after his death, but Stalin—at a time when the real Stalin was very much in a position to see "himself" on the screen.

PAUL THOMAS

■ Paul Thomas teaches in the Political Science Department at the University of California at Berkeley.

The Studio System

Edited by Janet Staiger. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995. $48.00 cloth; $16.00 paper.

In *The Studio System*, Janet Staiger and her contributors take some close historical looks at Hollywood as a social construct, principally through methods supplied by sociologists (in the tradition of Joseph Turow, Paul DiMaggio, Richard A. Peterson, and Paul M. Hirsch). Their common research questions concern such matters as production norms, work routines, and product conventions. Specifically, they argue that we should closely examine all the workers in the Hollywood system, not just the director as auteur or the producer as dominating force. Collective groups make Hollywood movies, and their social relations ought to be studied. In this anthology the emphasis is firmly on social—not economic—relations. We read of conflicts in resolving the many necessary production decisions, of the impact and influence of all the compromises necessary to remain a stable and effective working group, and of the effects of budgets on this complex creative process.

In this new anthology, targeted for professors of film history and their students, Staiger has collected 14 essays that offer a detailed examination of what it was like to work in Hollywood from its earliest days through the late 1950s. There is no treatment of the sociology of the studio labor process after 1960, following explicitly on the periodization set forth in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, published a decade ago by David Bordwell, Staiger, and

Kristin Thompson. Indeed, in her introduction, Staiger explicitly links *The Studio System* to that earlier, now seminal work.

The anthology is clearly structured. Staiger's introduction and Edward Buscombe's notes on Columbia Pictures (published in *Screen* a generation ago) set up the essays that follow. But this is as close as *The Studio System* gets to film theory.

Four essays comprise part II, entitled "Key Workers and the System." Here, Richard B. Jewell treats Howard Hawks and *Bringing Up Baby*, Paul Kerr examines the auteur status of director Joseph H. Lewis, Thomas Schatz analyzes Bette Davis and the making of *Jezebel*, and David Bordwell dissects deep-focus cinematography, particularly as applied by Gregg Toland. Thus, as can be seen from this listing, key workers seems to mean directors, stars, and cinematographers, but not producers or studio heads.

Part III contains three essays, under the heading "Product Conventions." Staiger moves the locus of her anthology to the filmic text. Robert C. Allen analyzes *Sunrise*, Jeffrey Sconce examines narrative and social authority in the cinematic reconstruction of *Jane Eyre*, and Derral Cheatwood closely catalogues the conventions of 41 Tarzan films made in Hollywood between 1918 and 1970. Surprisingly, there are no images reproduced in any of the three essays to offer visual evidence for these analyses.

The three essays of part IV treat "Middle-Line Workers and the System." Martin Norden examines women in early cinema, James Lastra provides a fascinating reinterpretation of the coming of sound, and Denise Hartsough takes on studio labor relations and union corruption during the 1930s. Here we have the heart of *The Studio System*—looking at original and exciting research questions. In particular, Denise Hartsough's scholarly work has too long been underappreciated.

The final three essays in Staiger's anthology treat external social dimensions. Richard Maltby presents an early version of his ongoing research on the Production Code Administration, Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black offer an article on the effect of the Office of War Information on Hollywood film-making during World War II, and Thomas Doherty examines "teenpics" released in the middle 1950s. This is not new material; the first and third essays are a decade old, Koppes and Black's essay is from 1977.

Staiger's end matter includes a four-page annotated bibliography plus the expected biographies of contributors and an index. *The Studio System* is extensively footnoted, but despite essays closely examining a number of complex films, devoid of visual context. David Bordwell's 45 incomparable frame enlargements cannot make up for the rest of the text.

This anthology can best be situated by comparing it to Tino Balio's *The American Film Industry* (1985) and *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (1990). Balio organized his anthologies around business, economic, and technological variables, and tried to take "his story" up to the present. Only on a rare occasion does one find in either Balio effort an essay dealing with audience-building or the social impact of HUAC. Staiger, except for Edward Buscombe's studio-specific functional co-introduction, jettisons business and technical concerns in favor of social variables: the means of production, ideological formation, and external imposition on the creative process. One can see this most clearly by comparing Thomas Schatz's essay on Bette Davis and Kathy Klaprat's essay on the same figure found in *The American Film Industry*. Staiger liked Schatz's detailing of how workers interrelated to the process of labor, while Balio went with Klaprat's examination of Bette Davis as part of a studio business strategy.

Like nearly all anthologies, *The Studio System* suffers from reprinting only the accessible. Only the editor's introduction and James Lastra's essay are new to this volume. The other contributions are from widely circulated journals—plus an excerpt (attributed to David Bordwell) from *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*. The work of Jewell, Schatz, Bordwell, Allen, Nolan, Koppes, Black, and Doherty can easily be found in book form. Richard Maltby's book should be out by the time you read this review; Paul Kerr anthologized his own version of this material as *The Hollywood Film Industry* for the British Film Institute a decade ago. The essays of Sconce, Cheatwood, and Hartsough are new to anthologies, but only James Lastra cannot be found elsewhere, and in his contributor's blurb he promises a book related to his essay.

The Studio System is best seen as a textbook pure and simple, with an essay a week for a semester-length course. As such, it would have profited from an essay explicitly on historical method (indeed two or three theoretical pieces would have been even better). It would have also helped student readers to learn of materials they might have used in their own research, from trade papers to microfilm of primary documents, from sources on the Internet to the leading archives in the U.S. and abroad. Such material would have turned this good textbook into an invaluable one.

DOUGLAS GOMERY

■ Douglas Gomery teaches at the University of Maryland.

Truths and Fictions CD-ROM

By Pedro Meyer. New York: Voyager, 1994. $49.95 (Mac only).

Opening with an orchestral burst of music from Copland's *El Salón Mexico*, Pedro Meyer's CD-ROM *Truths and Fictions* announces its roots in Mexican and American culture. Born in Spain and active in Mexico as a photographer since 1960, Meyer uses digital imagery to interweave images of the United States and Mexico. Throughout it, culture is closely linked to history; the opening titles appear over an image of an old stucco wall and the menu's icons look like Mayan stone carvings. Thematically, Meyer is the crossover figure, mediating between Mexican and American culture, old and new technologies; the CD-ROM recounts his journey as much as his methods.

It also takes on broader questions of the impact of media technology on cultural tradition, including art, religion, family, and community, examining both gains and losses due to digital imaging. Meyer's work is often overtly fictional, depicting impossible or unlikely scenes, but his use of digital technology, with its cleaner composites and greater control over imagery, shows how photographic fictions can express metaphorical truths, and how technology affects expression itself.

In the bilingual introduction to the disc, he acknowledges the CD-ROM as a part of history, giving some background on the making of the disc. Meyer's voice is present throughout the CD, describing processes behind photos in the "Digital Studio," and even in the disc's help buttons.

The "Gallery" section features 92 of Meyer's images with captions, viewable by themselves or with the "Guided Tour" narrated by the disc's other voice, Jonathan Green, Director of the California Museum of Photography. In the audio tour, Green mentions formal differences in the way Mexico and the United States are represented, and how themes of technology and religion pervade Meyer's images. From his discussion of "the digital revolution's simultaneous collusion with violence and its reprehensibility to rationalize violence as entertainment and fiction" to his enlightening explanations of the images' subtle religious contexts, his comments provide some cultural background for Meyer's work.

Both the "Gallery" and "Digital Studio" sections feature a visual index of images, giving users direct access. While the surreal juxtapositions of disparate elements identify some works as composites, others are very subtle and appear unaltered. Along with digitally altered images, Meyer has included some unaltered images that *appear* to be altered but are not; thus, digital media can lead one to question not just digital images, but all images.

In the "Digital Studio" section, the compositing process behind several images is shown in detail. Throughout, Meyer describes his methods and motivations, including a few failed attempts and versions of composites later redone. He also describes ethical quandaries arising from his manipulations: in one image of an amputee, he erased a second limb to make the image more powerful. Although he included the image, he openly admits the issue still troubles him greatly.

The pictures in the "Digital Studio" vary in complexity, some having as many as 11 illustrated steps in their creation. At times, Meyer's justification of his manipulation grows a bit thin; in one image a cloth was composited over a woman's shoulder because Meyer thought her bright white shirt distracting. Most of the time, however, Meyer's composites are done with cultural commentary in mind. Often the composited elements are characters who represent conflicting sides of some dichotomy, be it cultural, spiritual, or national. Changes in the size of characters also convey meaning and importance. In one, an Anglo mobile-home owner is brought down to the size of her ceramic mariachi band lawn ornaments, gently suggesting the belittling such stereotypes can have.

Appearing as it does on CD-ROM, *Truths and Fictions* is still more of a celebration of technology than a critique, but it does raise many questions and issues surrounding the integration of technology and culture. In revealing the construction of digital images, it helps to show the constructedness of *all* images, and, indirectly, the constructedness of culture. *Truths and Fictions* is equal parts art documentary, cultural and technological critique, and heartfelt journey of a traditional photographer into the realm of digital photography.

MARK J. P. WOLF

■ Mark J. P. Wolf teaches at Concordia University in Wisconsin.

Book Note

Contributor to Book Note:

John Fell is the author of *Stride!: Fats, Jimmy, Lion Lamb and All the Other Ticklers.*

Buscombe, Edward, series editor. BFI Classics. Breakwell, Ian. *An Actor's Revenge*. Frayling, Christopher. *Things to Come*. French, Philip and Kersli. *Wild Strawberries*. Grafe, Frieda. *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. Landy, Marcia, and Amy Villarejo. *Queen Christina*. Louvish, Simon. *It's a Gift*. Vaughan, Dai. *Odd Man Out*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1994–95. Totaling these in, the series runs now to 26; approaches continue to vary, some heavily researched, others more painstakingly documented with enlargements and production stills.

One exception to the usual black-and-white frames is announced on Breakwell's cover to *An Actor's Revenge*. Daiei-Color's play on Pop Art Kabuki theater decor shows handsomely on interior pages as well. The color serves little narrative purpose, but Ichikawa's film could hardly be visualized without it. Breakwell celebrates the principal actor, Kazuo Hasegawa; he also starred in a 1930s serial version made by Kinugasa. On each occasion Hasegawa seeks revenge for an earlier crime committed against his father. Simulating an effeminate drag actor, Hasegawa's raging interior monologues jar against his outwardly mincing role, just as the film's music contradicts the settings, whether placid or distorted. Breakwell makes *An Actor's Revenge* sound like *Warning Shadows* alternating reels with *Judex*.

Christopher Fayling's research on *Things to Come* uncovers an H. G. Wells whose undisputed authority, ceded by Alexander Korda during production, was undermined by Wells's singularly hortatory vision—alternately apocalyptic, dour, and futurist. The writer could never exhort technicians into mounting rhetorical dialogue, grandiose sets, and film sounds that were personally acceptable although he never knew quite why. Wells called for music, for example, that would evoke audience appreciation for the soundless machinery of the new world. Vincent Korda is largely credited with the film's design, most strikingly for Everytown 2054 AD, where no smoking is permitted.

Wild Strawberries enjoys a translator's ease with Swedish and years of Bergman study. Highlighting their director by conjoining with others, the Frenches position Victor Seastrom, August Strindberg, the painters Edvard Munch and Carl Larrson, and theater pieces Bergman directed: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, The Misanthrope*, and *Death of a Salesman*, where Victor Seastrom played Willie Loman. Much of *Wild Starwberries'* subsequent history is recapitulated in a final section.

In *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir,* Frieda Grafe reflects on consequences implicit in adapting a novel (where the captain exists as a "voice" in Mrs. Muir's mind) to a film in which Rex Harrison, no specter at all, looks quite as real as Gene Tierney. Director Joseph Mankiewicz tinkered with Philip Dunne's screenplay; he thought the ghost was a unique opportunity to play past against present simultaneously on screen.

Gender identity, sexual innuendo, and censorship are foregrounded in *Queen Christina*. Manipulated audience perceptions of Garbo (still a constellation in MGM's heaven) play coyly against the studio-concocted Swedish queen, whose sexuality veers between lesbian ambiguity and old Garbo/Gilbert gossip. Film biography ("biopic") provides the armature on which Landy and Villarejo clothe their study.

It's a Gift makes W.C. Fields its subject, his movie an index to obsession and stage routines dating back to vaudeville. Quoting from old films, the text braves pitfalls inherent in describing movie humor on paper. Best is Louvish's dissection of the famous porch scene, its history and production. His juxtaposition of Fields's stage dialogue with counterpart/counterpoint in Beckett and Pinter is apt.

Dai Vaughan's closely viewed *Odd Man Out* emphasizes divergences of style (realism, expressionism, stage and screen performances, Christian iconography, generic references) without rancor. In a nice phrase, "[Reed] allows the conventions to jostle." Challenging another critical tradition, the writer accepts James Mason's various special-effect hallucinations; by Vaughan's measure, such scenes serve a necessary purpose in establishing Johnny McQueen's social and spiritual isolation. They're a prelude to his figurative deterioration from narrative subject to object. Alert to musical quotes (often rationalized as radio snippets), Vaughan curiously ignores William Alwyn's noteworthy music for the film's last moments.

In toto, these seven new monographs reaffirm the series' pluralities of interest and motive. Writers clearly assume reader familiarity with their films, though the degree of presumed intimacy varies. It's a range from study guide to conference paper.

JOHN FELL

Sin *AND* Censorship

The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry

Frank Walsh

"An engaging ...behind-the-scenes romp through the cutting floors of Hollywood history.... Walsh dramatically highlights tensions between Catholic dogma and Hollywood glitter."—*Kirkus Reviews*

"A meticulous, **fascinating** account of the moral confrontation between the Catholic Church in the United States and the motion-picture industry."—Joe Wakelee-Lynch, *Philadelphia Inquirer* 32 illus. $35.00

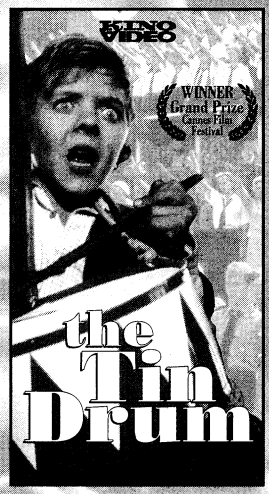
Yale University Press

P.O. Box 209040, New Haven, CT 06520
To order call toll-free: 1-800-YUP-READ

NEW FOR FALL '96

ACADEMY AWARD™ WINNER
BEST FOREIGN FILM

REMASTERED FROM ORIGINAL NEGATIVE.
LETTERBOXED • YELLOW SUBTITLES



From Director VOLKER SCHLÖNDORFF

GRIFFITH MASTERWORKS
SERIES TWO

THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES
& Selected Biograph Shorts
U.S. 1909-1913 B&W 90 minutes

America
U.S. 1924 Tinted 141 minutes

ORPHANS of the STORM
U.S. 1921 B&W 150 minutes

Sally of the Sawdust
U.S. 1925 Tinted 113 minutes

THE STRUGGLE
U.S. 1931 B&W 77 minutes

Isn't Life Wonderful
U.S. 1924 B&W 115 minutes

Directed by ANTHONY MANN
Cinematography by JOHN ALTON

RAW DEAL
1948 • B/W • 79 Minutes

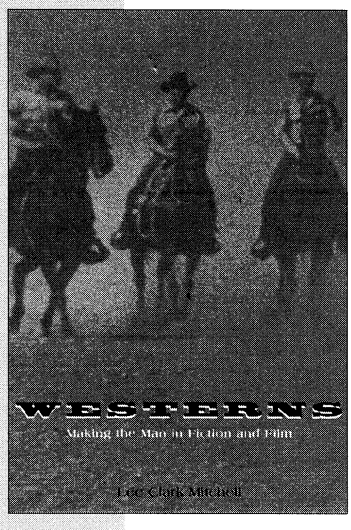
T-MEN
1948 • B/W • 92 Minutes

HE WALKED BY NIGHT
1949 • B/W • 79 Minutes

Send for our 1997 catalog listing over 250 films

KINO VIDEO

333 West 39th St., NYC, NY 10018
1-800 562-3330
http://www.kino.com



Westerns

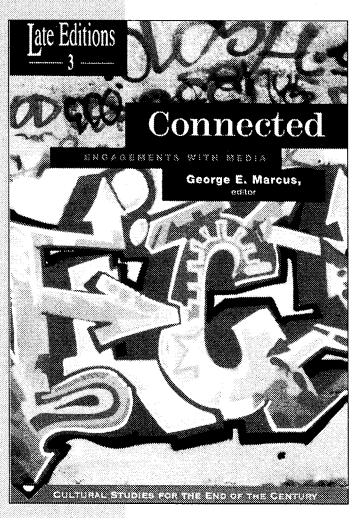
Making the Man in Fiction and Film

Lee Clark Mitchell

This landmark study shows that the Western owes its perennial appeal not to unchanging conventions but to the deftness with which it responds to the obsessions and fears of its audience. And no obsession, Lee Mitchell argues, has figured more prominently in the Western than what it means to be a man.

"A fresh, informed and intelligent look at the Western."
—Ed Buscombe, British Film Institute

Cloth $29.95



Connected

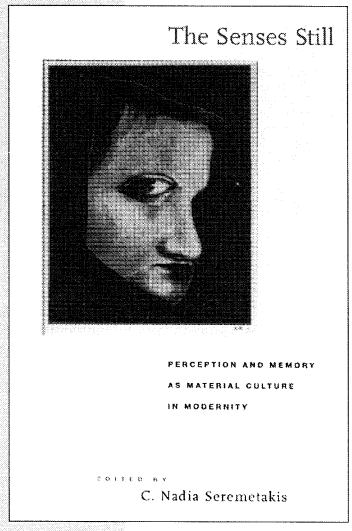
Engagements with Media

Edited by George E. Marcus

Blending the immediacy of interviews, the objectivity of journalism, and the intellectual rigor of scholarship, *Connected* explores the effects of the stunning proliferation of information technologies in the twilight of the twentieth century.

***Paper $22.50**

Late Editions: Cultural Studies for the End of the Century



Now in Paper

The Senses Still

Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity

Edited by C. Nadia Seremetakis

These essays bring together innovative and exciting interdisciplinary work in film studies, cultural studies, ethnography, and political culture.

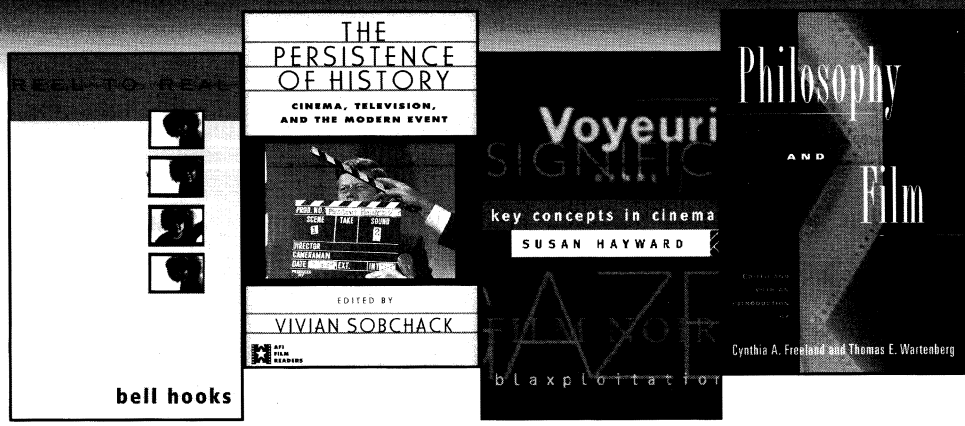
"The Senses Still explores areas of cultural life too complex, too experimental to be contained within the bounds of traditional ethnography. . . . An understanding of culture must include an examination of the role of the senses. Seremetakis and her co-authors confront us with this necessity."—Jay Ruby, Temple University

Paper $13.95

***Cloth edition available**

The University of Chicago Press

5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637
Visit us at http://www.press.uchicago.edu



Reel To Real
Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies
bell hooks

Reel To Real not only brings together hooks' classic essays on films such as Paris Is Burning, but also newer work on Pulp Fiction, Crooklyn and Waiting To Exhale. hooks also examines the world of independent cinema.

256 pp $16.95/pb

The Persistence of History
Cinema, Television and the Modern Event
Edited by Vivian Sobchack

This is an anthology of essays from major film scholars and historians which focuses on a radical contemporary challenge to historical representation in film. This challenge is brought about by what the collection terms "the modernist event"—novel historical occurrences unthinkable before the 20th century and raised to visibility through the mass mediations of film and television.

288 pp $17.95/pb

Introduction to Film Studies
Jill Nelmes

Introduction to Film Studies is a comprehensive textbook for students of cinema. It provides a guide to main concepts used to analyze the film industry and film texts, and introduces some of the world's key national cinemas.

480 pp 100 illus $24.95/pb

Key Concepts in Cinema Studies
Susan Hayward

This is a comprehensive glossary of the main terms, techniques, and concepts in film theory and production, and the debates surrounding them. Full historical overviews of key film genres, descriptions of major movements of world cinema, and complete definitions of key film production terms combine to make this the most thorough glossary of its kind.

496 pp 20 b/w photos $17.95/pb

Philosophy and Film
Edited by Cynthia A. Freeland and Thomas E. Wartenberg

Philosophy and Film is the first collection of essays on film to be exclusively written by philosophers. Its premise is that philosophy offers a unique perspective with the potential to make distinctive and valuable contributions to film studies.

288 pp $16.95/pb

Hollywood in Crisis
Colin Schindler

From escapist musicals to gangster movies and Westerns, even to the radical films of the Warner studios, Schindler illustrates how the studios helped foster feelings of unity and patriotism.

272 pp 20 illus $18.95/pb

Prices subject to change.

Routledge 29 West 35th Street, N.Y., NY 10001-2299
http: //www.routledge.com/routledge.html
AT BOOKSTORES, or call Routledge Customer Service
(800) 634-7064 Visa/MasterCard/Amex accepted.

ROUTLEDGE